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THE UNCANNY
X-MEN™
Cockrum

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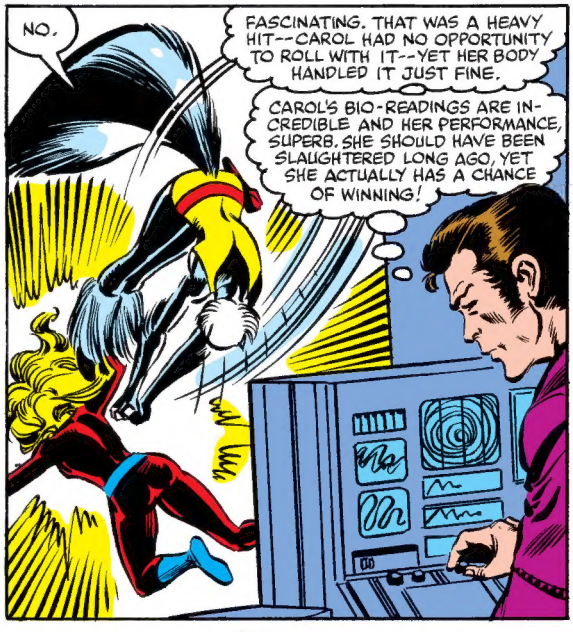
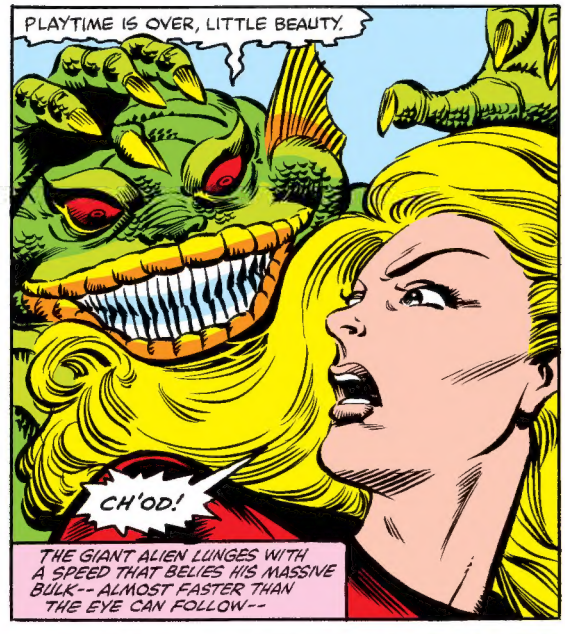
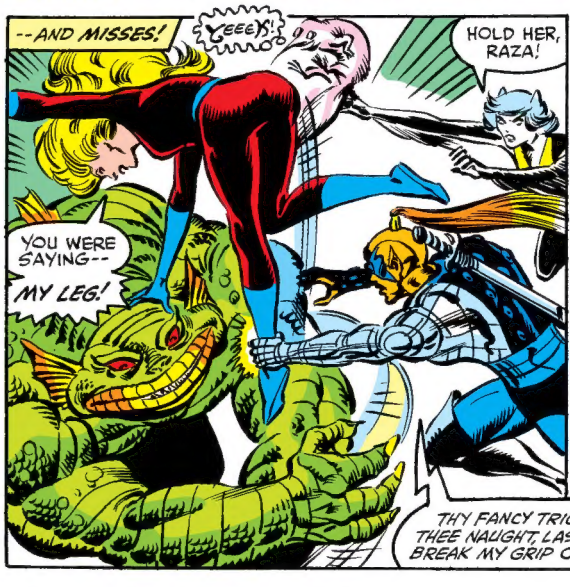
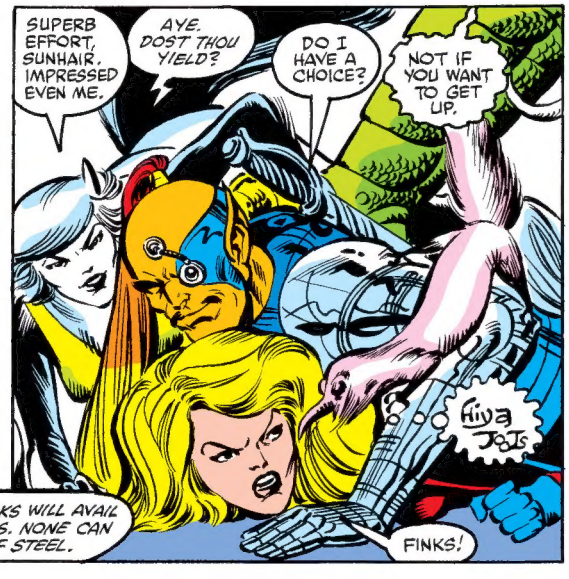
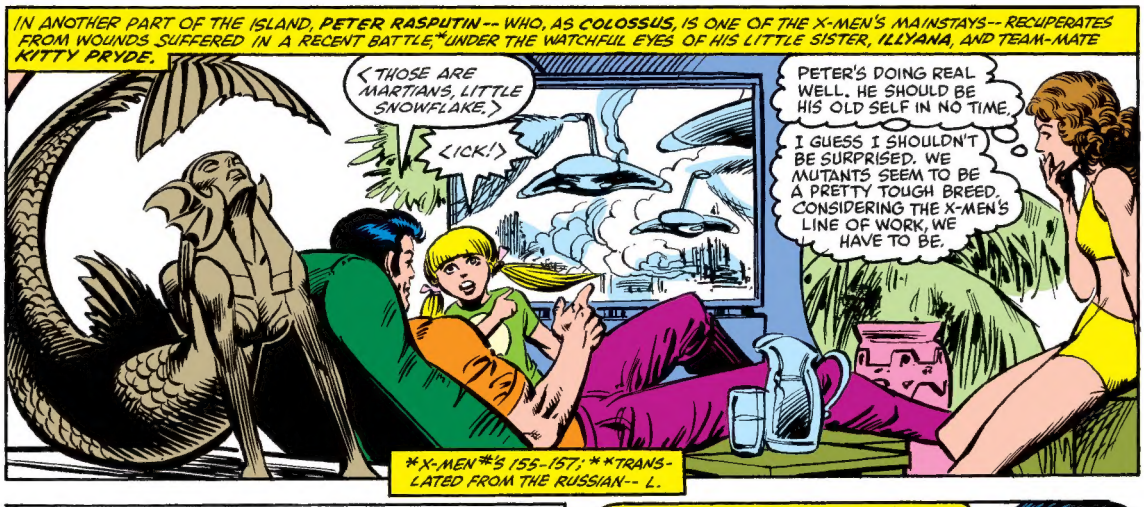
...BUT THIS DUEL IS TURNING OUT SPLENDIDLY!
EASY FOR THOU TO SAY, LUMMOX. SHE HASN'T THROWN THEE YET. THAT HURT!
MISSED!
MONITORING THE BOUT IS N.A.S.A. PHYSICIST PETER CORBEAU, ANOTHER OF THE X-MEN'S TRUSTED ASSOCIATES.
HOW 'BOUT THAT. LOSING YOUR TOUCH, HEPZIBAH?

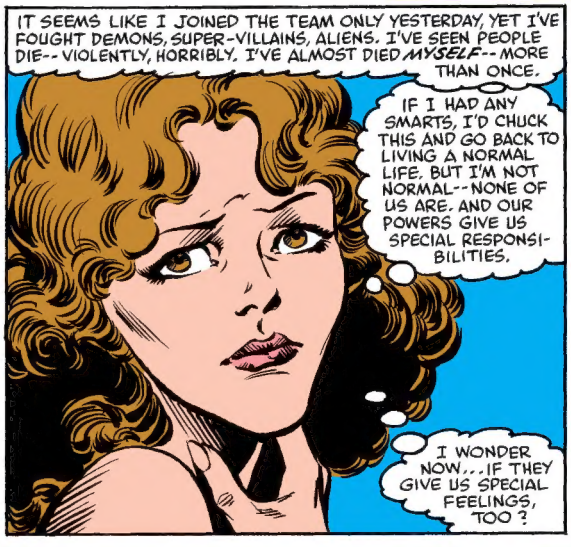

NO.
FASCINATING. THAT WAS A HEAVY HIT--CAROL HAD NO OPPORTUNITY TO ROLL WITH IT--YET HER BODY HANDLED IT JUST FINE.
CAROL'S BIO-READINGS ARE INCREDIBLE AND HER PERFORMANCE, SUPERB. SHE SHOULD HAVE BEEN SLAUGHTERED LONG AGO, YET SHE ACTUALLY HAS A CHANCE OF WINNING!


PLAYTIME IS OVER, LITTLE BEAUTY.
CH'OD!
THE GIANT ALIEN LUNGES WITH A SPEED THAT BELIES HIS MASSIVE BULK--ALMOST FASTER THAN THE EYE CAN FOLLOW--

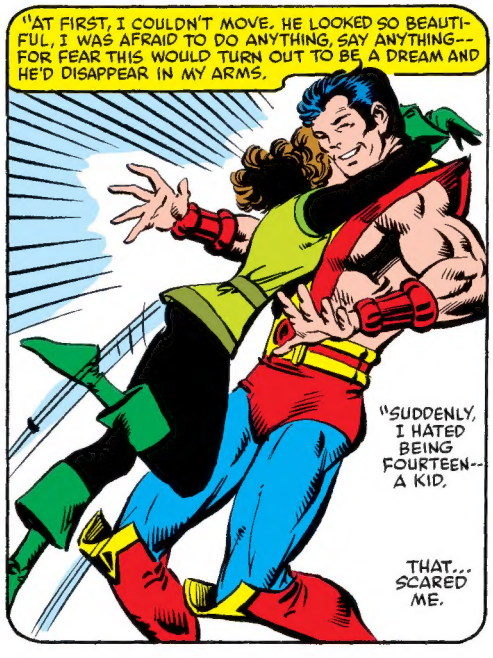

--AND MISSES!
YEEEK!
HOLD HER, RAZA!
YOU WERE SAYING--
MY LEG!
THY FANCY TRICKS WILL AVAIL THEE NAUGHT, LASS. NONE CAN BREAK MY GRIP OF STEEL.


SUPERB EFFORT, SUNHAIR. IMPRESSED EVEN ME.
AYE. DOST THOU YIELD?
DO I HAVE A CHOICE?
NOT IF YOU WANT TO GET UP.
Hiya Jo-Jo
FINKS!

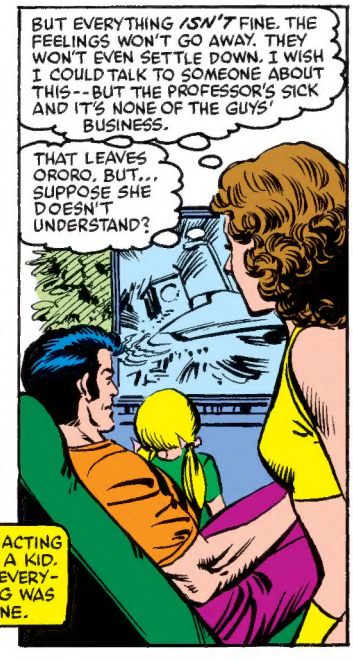

IN ANOTHER PART OF THE ISLAND, PETER RASPUTIN -- WHO, AS COLOSSUS, IS ONE OF THE X-MEN'S MAINSTAYS -- RECUPERATES FROM WOUNDS SUFFERED IN A RECENT BATTLE,* UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYES OF HIS LITTLE SISTER, ILLYANA, AND TEAM-MATE KITTY PRYDE.
<THOSE ARE MARTIANS, LITTLE SNOWFLAKE.>
<ICK!>
PETER'S DOING REAL WELL. HE SHOULD BE HIS OLD SELF IN NO TIME.
I GUESS I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED. WE MUTANTS SEEM TO BE A PRETTY TOUGH BREED. CONSIDERING THE X-MEN'S LINE OF WORK, WE HAVE TO BE.
*X-MEN #'S 155-157; **TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN -- L.


IT SEEMS LIKE I JOINED THE TEAM ONLY YESTERDAY, YET I'VE FOUGHT DEMONS, SUPER-VILLAINS, ALIENS. I'VE SEEN PEOPLE DIE -- VIOLENTLY, HORRIBLY. I'VE ALMOST DIED MYSELF -- MORE THAN ONCE.
IF I HAD ANY SMARTS, I'D CHUCK THIS AND GO BACK TO LIVING A NORMAL LIFE. BUT I'M NOT NORMAL -- NONE OF US ARE. AND OUR POWERS GIVE US SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.
I WONDER NOW... IF THEY GIVE US SPECIAL FEELINGS, TOO?

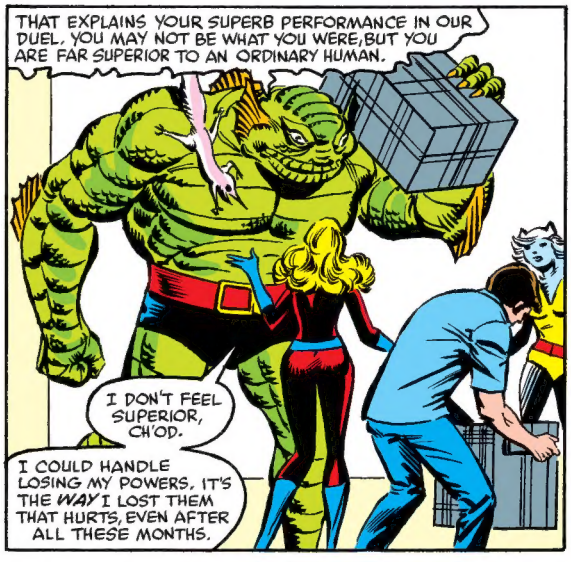
"WHEN I SAW COLOSSUS KILLED,* I THOUGHT I'D DIE MYSELF. I'D NEVER FELT SO HOLLOW AND EMPTY -- LIKE SOMEBODY HAD RIPPED OUT MY HEART.
"THEN, LATER, WHEN I DISCOVERED HE WAS STILL ALIVE, I KIND OF FELT... WORSE.
*X-MEN #156 -- L.

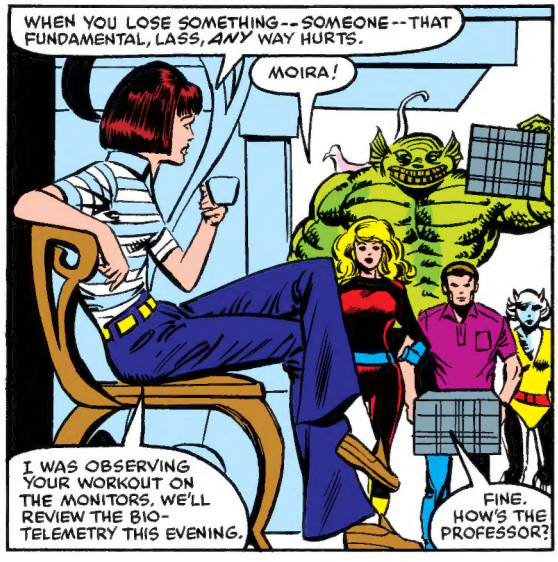

"AT FIRST, I COULDN'T MOVE. HE LOOKED SO BEAUTIFUL, I WAS AFRAID TO DO ANYTHING, SAY ANYTHING -- FOR FEAR THIS WOULD TURN OUT TO BE A DREAM AND HE'D DISAPPEAR IN MY ARMS.
"SUDDENLY, I HATED BEING FOURTEEN -- A KID.
THAT... SCARED ME.

"BUT THEN I HUGGED AND KISSED HIM -- TAKING REFUGE FROM EMOTIONS, SENSATIONS --
"-- I'D NEVER EXPERIENCED AND DIDN'T UNDERSTAND --
"-- IN ACTING LIKE A KID. AND EVERYTHING WAS FINE.

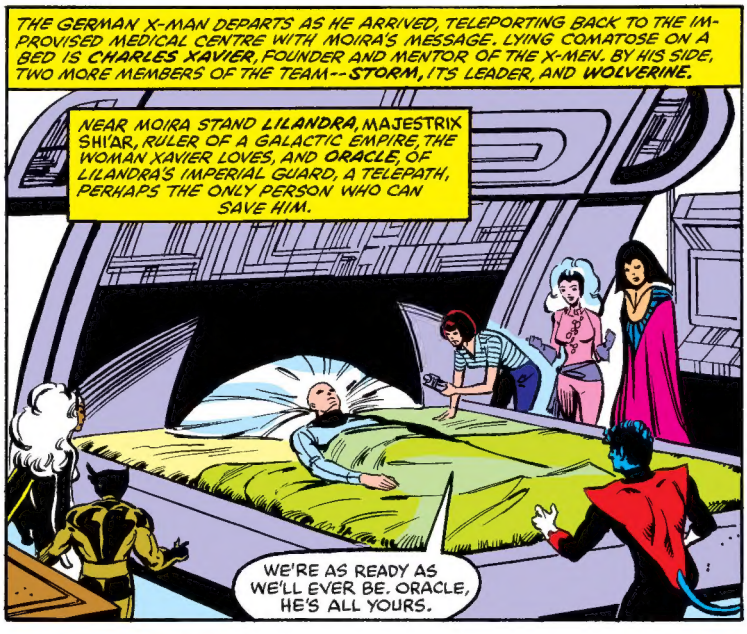

BUT EVERYTHING ISN'T FINE. THE FEELINGS WON'T GO AWAY. THEY WON'T EVEN SETTLE DOWN. I WISH I COULD TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT THIS -- BUT THE PROFESSOR'S SICK AND IT'S NONE OF THE GUYS' BUSINESS.
THAT LEAVES ORORO. BUT... SUPPOSE SHE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND?

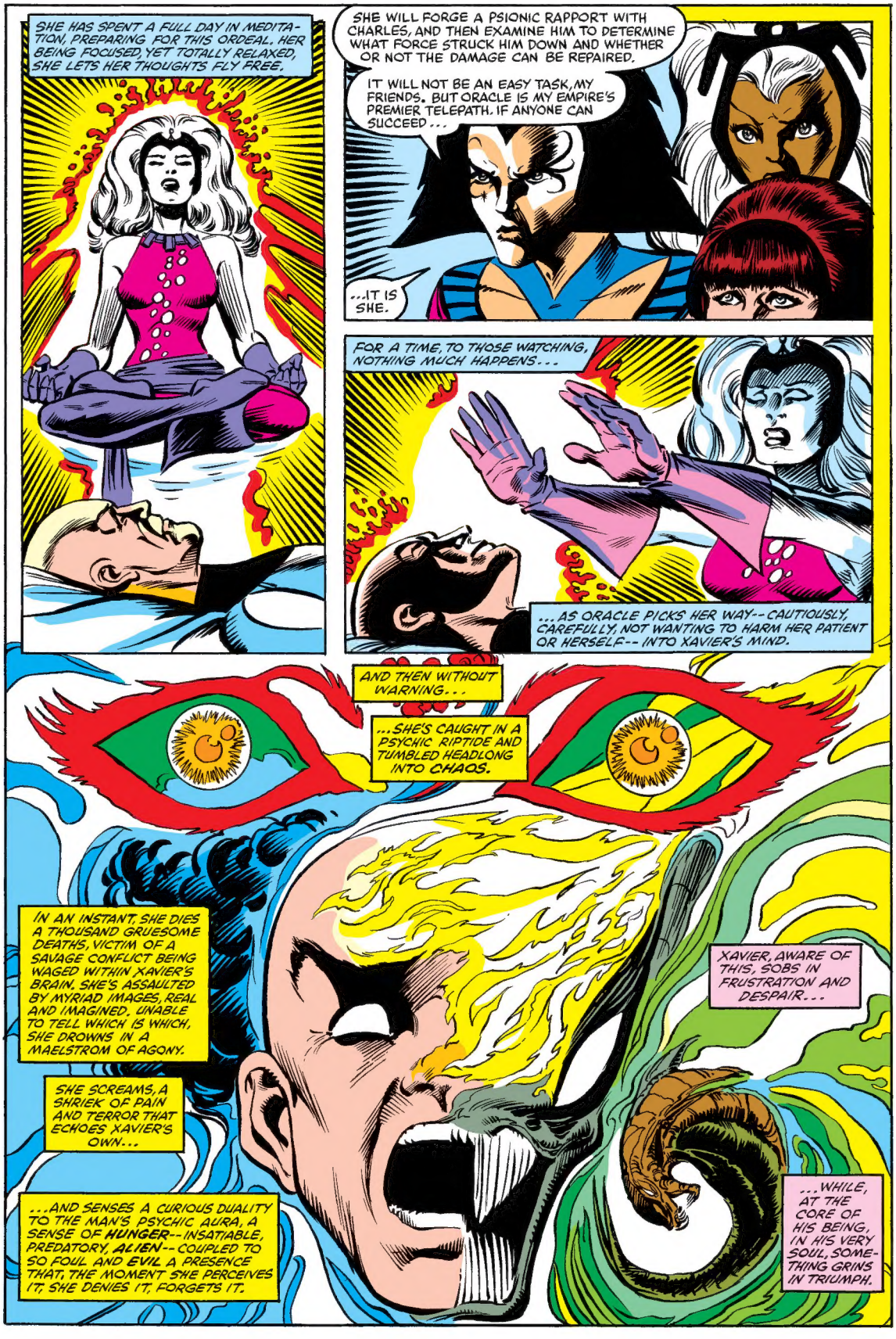
WHILE KITTY WRESTLES WITH THE REALITIES OF GROWING UP...
HAST THOU COMPLETED THY EVALUATION OF OUR SPARRING PARTNER, SCHOLAR CORBEAU?
YEAH, PETER. THE SUSPENSE IS MURDER, WHAT'S THE VERDICT?
EXTRAORDINARY! YEARS AGO, WHEN YOU WERE TRANSFORMED INTO MS. MARVEL, YOUR GENETIC STRUCTURE WAS IRREVOCABLY ALTERED. IN ADDITION TO GAINING SUPER-POWERS, YOU WERE EVOLVED INTO A PERFECT PHYSICAL SPECIMEN OF HUMANITY.
YOU MAY HAVE BEEN STRIPPED OF THOSE POWERS, BUT THE BASIC GENETIC MATERIAL AND MODIFICATIONS REMAIN INTACT.

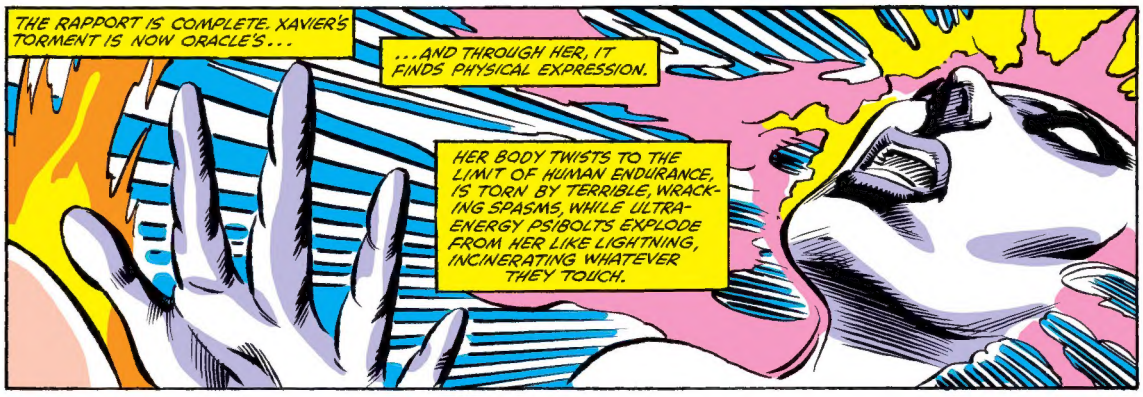

THAT EXPLAINS YOUR SUPERB PERFORMANCE IN OUR DUEL. YOU MAY NOT BE WHAT YOU WERE, BUT YOU ARE FAR SUPERIOR TO AN ORDINARY HUMAN.
I DON'T FEEL SUPERIOR, CH'OD.
I COULD HANDLE LOSING MY POWERS. IT'S THE WAY I LOST THEM THAT HURTS, EVEN AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS.


WHEN YOU LOSE SOMETHING--SOMEONE--THAT FUNDAMENTAL, LASS, ANY WAY HURTS.
MOIRA!
I WAS OBSERVING YOUR WORKOUT ON THE MONITORS. WE'LL REVIEW THE BIO-TELEMETRY THIS EVENING.
FINE. HOW'S THE PROFESSOR?

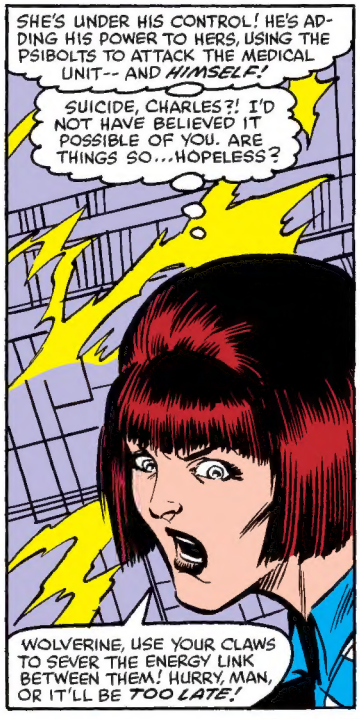
NO BETTER. NO WORSE. HE BREATHES. HIS HEART BEATS. HIS BODY FUNCTIONS. BEYOND THAT...
DR. MACTAGGERT, LILANDRA SENT ME FOR YOU.
THANK YOU, NIGHTCRAWLER. I'LL BE IN DIRECTLY.

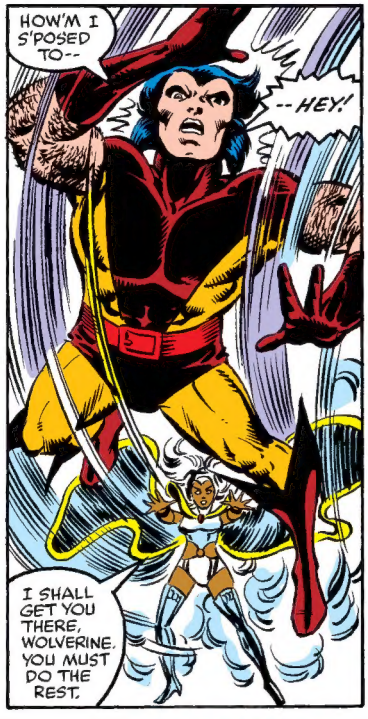

THE GERMAN X-MAN DEPARTS AS HE ARRIVED, TELEPORTING BACK TO THE IMPROVISED MEDICAL CENTRE WITH MOIRA'S MESSAGE. LYING COMATOSE ON A BED IS CHARLES XAVIER, FOUNDER AND MENTOR OF THE X-MEN. BY HIS SIDE, TWO MORE MEMBERS OF THE TEAM--STORM, ITS LEADER, AND WOLVERINE.
NEAR MOIRA STAND LILANDRA, MAJESTRIX SHI'AR, RULER OF A GALACTIC EMPIRE, THE WOMAN XAVIER LOVES, AND ORACLE, OF LILANDRA'S IMPERIAL GUARD, A TELEPATH, PERHAPS THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN SAVE HIM.
WE'RE AS READY AS WE'LL EVER BE. ORACLE, HE'S ALL YOURS.

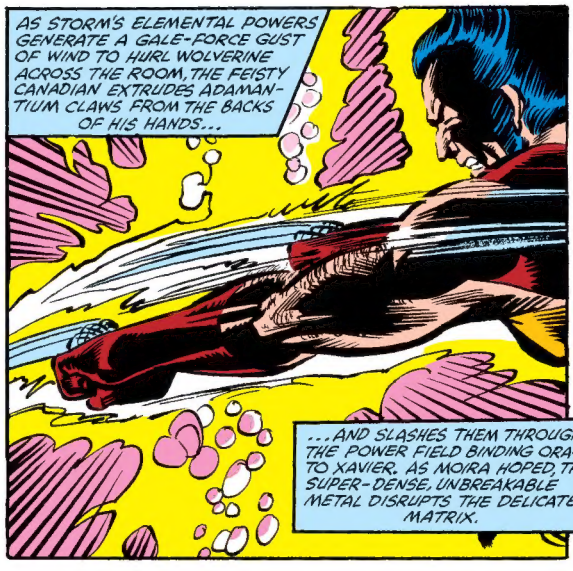

SHE HAS SPENT A FULL DAY IN MEDITATION, PREPARING FOR THIS ORDEAL. HER BEING FOCUSED, YET TOTALLY RELAXED, SHE LETS HER THOUGHTS FLY FREE.
SHE WILL FORGE A PSIONIC RAPPORT WITH CHARLES, AND THEN EXAMINE HIM TO DETERMINE WHAT FORCE STRUCK HIM DOWN AND WHETHER OR NOT THE DAMAGE CAN BE REPAIRED.
IT WILL NOT BE AN EASY TASK, MY FRIENDS. BUT ORACLE IS MY EMPIRE'S PREMIER TELEPATH. IF ANYONE CAN SUCCEED...
...IT IS SHE.
FOR A TIME, TO THOSE WATCHING, NOTHING MUCH HAPPENS...
...AS ORACLE PICKS HER WAY--CAUTIOUSLY, CAREFULLY, NOT WANTING TO HARM HER PATIENT OR HERSELF--INTO XAVIER'S MIND.
AND THEN WITHOUT WARNING...
...SHE'S CAUGHT IN A PSYCHIC RIPTIDE AND TUMBLED HEADLONG INTO CHAOS.
IN AN INSTANT, SHE DIES A THOUSAND GRUESOME DEATHS, VICTIM OF A SAVAGE CONFLICT BEING WAGED WITHIN XAVIER'S BRAIN. SHE'S ASSAULTED BY MYRIAD IMAGES, REAL AND IMAGINED. UNABLE TO TELL WHICH IS WHICH, SHE DROWNS IN A MAELSTROM OF AGONY.
SHE SCREAMS, A SHRIEK OF PAIN AND TERROR THAT ECHOES XAVIER'S OWN...
...AND SENSES A CURIOUS DUALITY TO THE MAN'S PSYCHIC AURA, A SENSE OF HUNGER--INSATIABLE, PREDATORY, ALIEN--COUPLED TO SO FOUL AND EVIL A PRESENCE THAT, THE MOMENT SHE PERCEIVES IT, SHE DENIES IT, FORGETS IT.
XAVIER, AWARE OF THIS, SOBS IN FRUSTRATION AND DESPAIR...
...WHILE, AT THE CORE OF HIS BEING, IN HIS VERY SOUL, SOMETHING GRINS IN TRIUMPH.

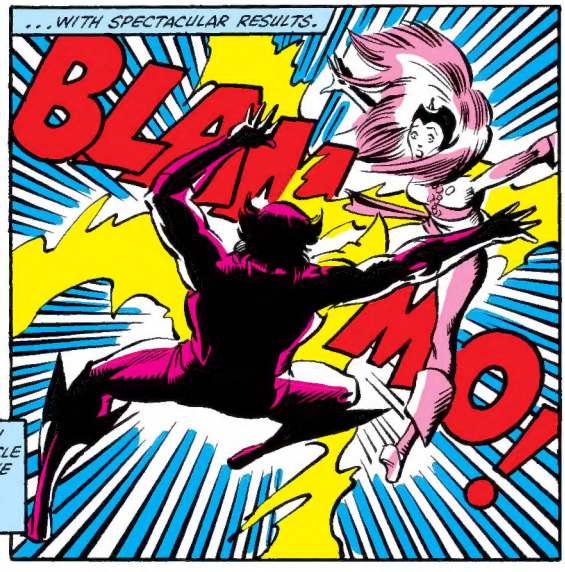

THE RAPPORT IS COMPLETE. XAVIER'S TORMENT IS NOW ORACLE'S...
...AND THROUGH HER, IT FINDS PHYSICAL EXPRESSION.
HER BODY TWISTS TO THE LIMIT OF HUMAN ENDURANCE, IS TORN BY TERRIBLE, WRACKING SPASMS, WHILE ULTRA-ENERGY PSIBOLTS EXPLODE FROM HER LIKE LIGHTNING, INCINERATING WHATEVER THEY TOUCH.

KILL!!
TO LIVE...MUST KILL--I!!

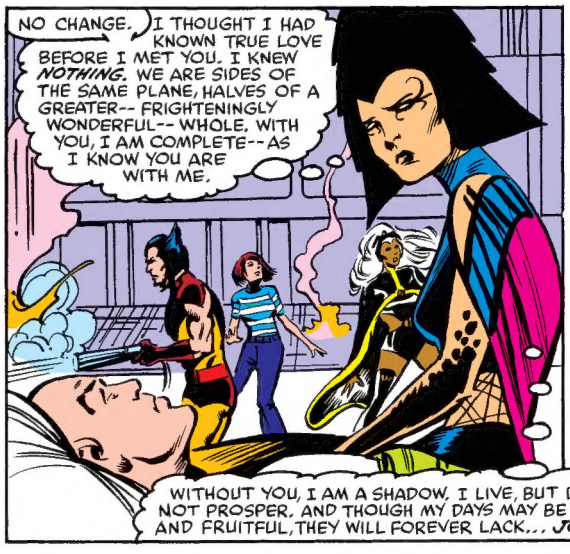

SHE'S UNDER HIS CONTROL! HE'S ADDING HIS POWER TO HERS, USING THE PSIBOLTS TO ATTACK THE MEDICAL UNIT-- AND HIMSELF!
SUICIDE, CHARLES?! I'D NOT HAVE BELIEVED IT POSSIBLE OF YOU. ARE THINGS SO...HOPELESS?
WOLVERINE, USE YOUR CLAWS TO SEVER THE ENERGY LINK BETWEEN THEM! HURRY, MAN, OR IT'LL BE TOO LATE!

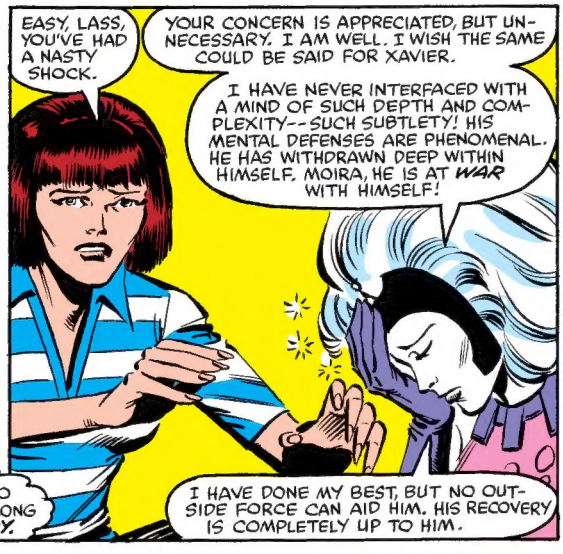

HOW'M I S'POSED TO--
--HEY!
I SHALL GET YOU THERE, WOLVERINE. YOU MUST DO THE REST.


AS STORM'S ELEMENTAL POWERS GENERATE A GALE-FORCE GUST OF WIND TO HURL WOLVERINE ACROSS THE ROOM, THE FEISTY CANADIAN EXTRUDES ADAMANTIUM CLAWS FROM THE BACKS OF HIS HANDS...
...AND SLASHES THEM THROUGH THE POWER FIELD BINDING ORACLE TO XAVIER. AS MOIRA HOPED, THE SUPER-DENSE, UNBREAKABLE METAL DISRUPTS THE DELICATE MATRIX.


...WITH SPECTACULAR RESULTS.
BLAM!
MO!

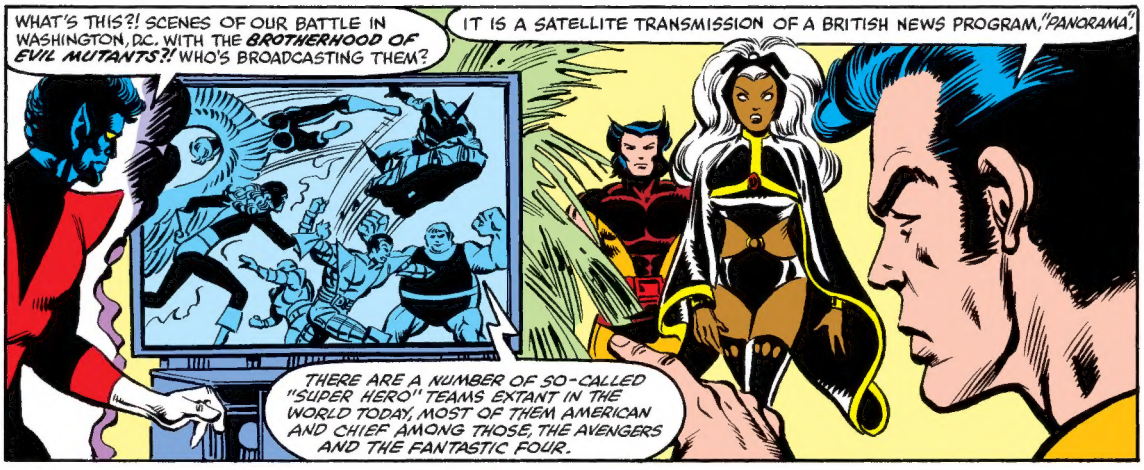
ORORO, THE COMPUTERS ARE BURNING! I HAVE AN EXTINGUISHER ON THIS ONE!
WHEW!
I'M OKAY, STORM.
AS AM I. AND, I THINK, MOIRA.
GOOD, KURT. A WHIRLWIND VACUUM SHOULD DRAW THE OXYGEN FROM THESE OTHER FIRES AND SUFFOCATE THEM.
BUT WHAT OF ORACLE-- AND CHARLES?!

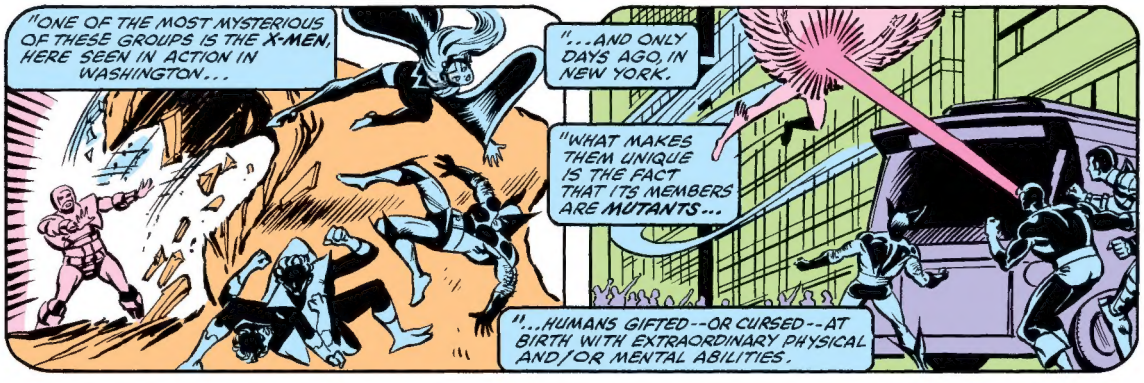

NO CHANGE.
I THOUGHT I HAD KNOWN TRUE LOVE BEFORE I MET YOU. I KNEW NOTHING. WE ARE SIDES OF THE SAME PLANE, HALVES OF A GREATER-- FRIGHTENINGLY WONDERFUL-- WHOLE. WITH YOU, I AM COMPLETE--AS I KNOW YOU ARE WITH ME.
WITHOUT YOU, I AM A SHADOW. I LIVE, BUT DO NOT PROSPER. AND THOUGH MY DAYS MAY BE LONG AND FRUITFUL, THEY WILL FOREVER LACK... JOY.

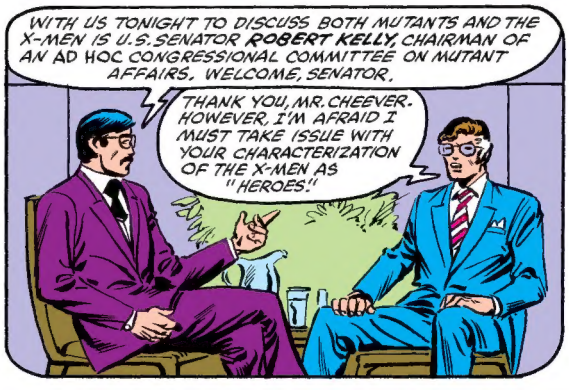

EASY, LASS, YOU'VE HAD A NASTY SHOCK.
YOUR CONCERN IS APPRECIATED, BUT UNNECESSARY. I AM WELL. I WISH THE SAME COULD BE SAID FOR XAVIER.
I HAVE NEVER INTERFACED WITH A MIND OF SUCH DEPTH AND COMPLEXITY--SUCH SUBTLETY! HIS MENTAL DEFENSES ARE PHENOMENAL. HE HAS WITHDRAWN DEEP WITHIN HIMSELF. MOIRA, HE IS AT WAR WITH HIMSELF!
I HAVE DONE MY BEST, BUT NO OUTSIDE FORCE CAN AID HIM. HIS RECOVERY IS COMPLETELY UP TO HIM.

I HEARD AN EXPLOSION, NIGHTCRAWLER. PROBLEMS?
BE CAREFUL WHERE YOU PHASE, KATZCHEN. FIRES ARE STILL BURNING AND MANY OF THESE ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS ARE STILL ACTIVE.
SO I SEE. WHAT HAPPENED?
ORACLE TRIED TO PULL HERR PROFESSOR XAVIER OUT OF HIS COMA.

THINGS DIDN'T WORK OUT, HUH?
YOU MIGHT SAY THAT, KITTEN.
UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I'M NOT SURE IF YOU GUYS'LL BE INTERESTED...
...BUT THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT THE X-MEN ON TV!

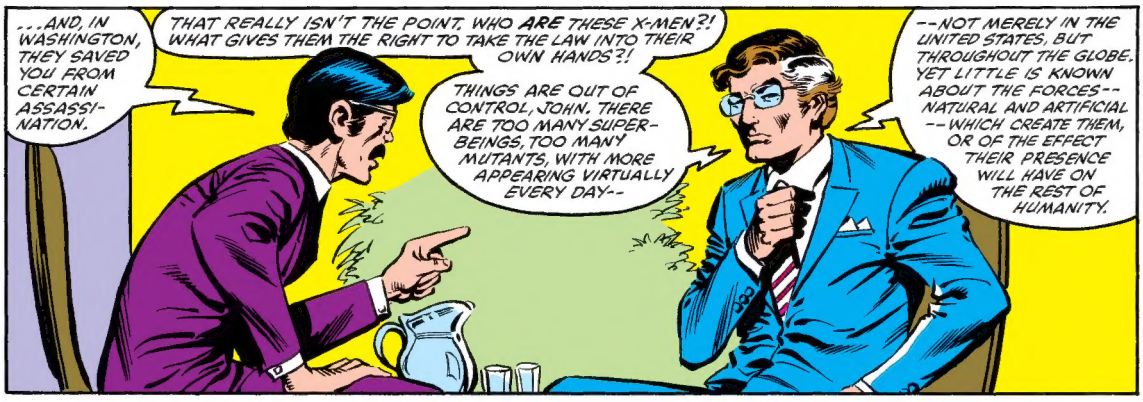

WHAT'S THIS?! SCENES OF OUR BATTLE IN WASHINGTON, D.C. WITH THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS?! WHO'S BROADCASTING THEM?
IT IS A SATELLITE TRANSMISSION OF A BRITISH NEWS PROGRAM, "PANORAMA".
THERE ARE A NUMBER OF SO-CALLED "SUPER HERO" TEAMS EXTANT IN THE WORLD TODAY, MOST OF THEM AMERICAN AND CHIEF AMONG THOSE, THE AVENGERS AND THE FANTASTIC FOUR.


"ONE OF THE MOST MYSTERIOUS OF THESE GROUPS IS THE X-MEN, HERE SEEN IN ACTION IN WASHINGTON...
"...AND ONLY DAYS AGO, IN NEW YORK.
"WHAT MAKES THEM UNIQUE IS THE FACT THAT ITS MEMBERS ARE MUTANTS...
"...HUMANS GIFTED--OR CURSED--AT BIRTH WITH EXTRAORDINARY PHYSICAL AND/OR MENTAL ABILITIES.

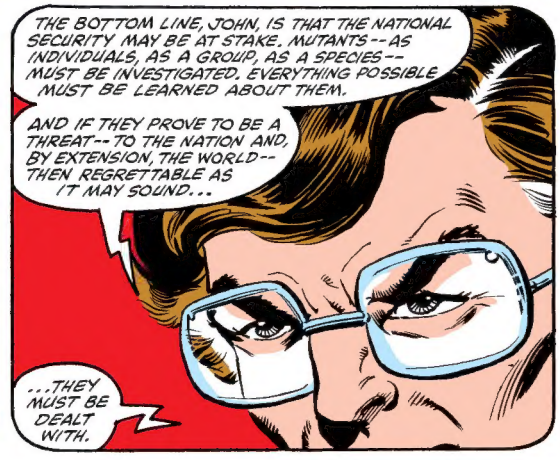

WITH US TONIGHT TO DISCUSS BOTH MUTANTS AND THE X-MEN IS U.S. SENATOR ROBERT KELLY, CHAIRMAN OF AN AD HOC CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE ON MUTANT AFFAIRS. WELCOME, SENATOR.
THANK YOU, MR. CHEEVER. HOWEVER, I'M AFRAID I MUST TAKE ISSUE WITH YOUR CHARACTERIZATION OF THE X-MEN AS "HEROES."

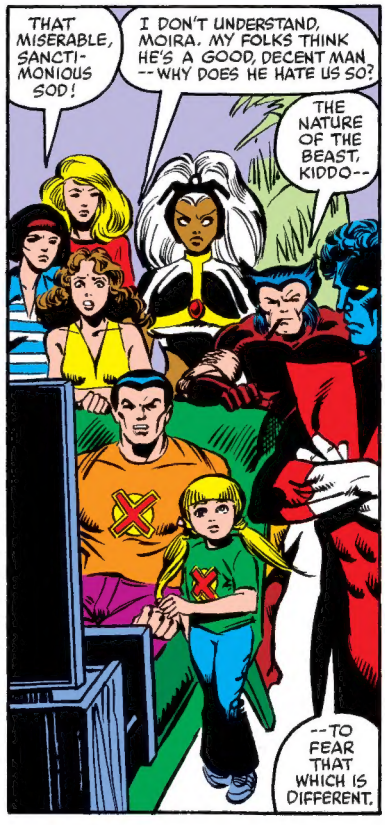
THAT FIGHT IN NEW YORK DESTROYED A 200-MILLION DOLLAR BUILDING--HARDLY THE ACT OF HEROES.
THEY'RE OUTLAWS, PURE AND SIMPLE.

ACH, I DO NOT BELIEVE THIS! WE WERE DEFENDING OURSELVES IN BOTH INSTANCES! SHOULD WE HAVE DONE NOTHING, AND LET OURSELVES--AND INNOCENT BYSTANDERS--BE SLAUGHTERED?!
YOU'RE WASTIN' YER BREATH, ELF. THE BEST ARGUMENTS ON EARTH WON'T CONVINCE THAT CREEP. HIS MIND'S MADE UP.
DO THE FACTS SUPPORT SUCH A CONTENTION, SENATOR?
IN EACH CASE THE X-MEN FOUGHT RECOGNIZED CRIMINALS...


...AND, IN WASHINGTON, THEY SAVED YOU FROM CERTAIN ASSASSI-NATION.
THAT REALLY ISN'T THE POINT. WHO ARE THESE X-MEN?! WHAT GIVES THEM THE RIGHT TO TAKE THE LAW INTO THEIR OWN HANDS?!
THINGS ARE OUT OF CONTROL, JOHN. THERE ARE TOO MANY SUPER-BEINGS, TOO MANY MUTANTS, WITH MORE APPEARING VIRTUALLY EVERY DAY--
--NOT MERELY IN THE UNITED STATES, BUT THROUGHOUT THE GLOBE. YET LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT THE FORCES--NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL--WHICH CREATE THEM, OR OF THE EFFECT THEIR PRESENCE WILL HAVE ON THE REST OF HUMANITY.

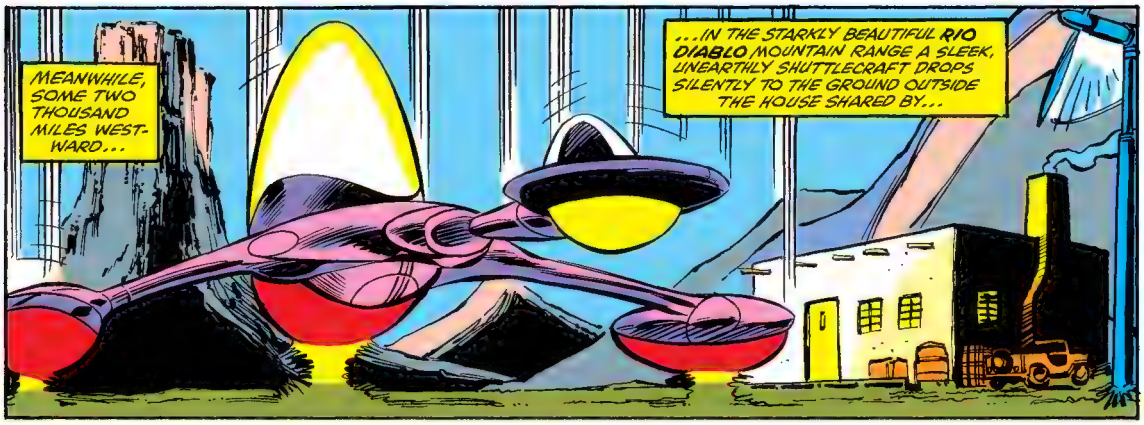
YOU SEEM TO BE SAYING THAT MUTANTS ARE DANGEROUS SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY EXIST. THAT'S AN...ODD POSITION FOR AN AVOWED CIVIL LIBERTARIAN LIKE YOURSELF.
I CAN'T DENY IT. BUT THERE ARE CERTAIN EXTRAORDINARY CASES...
...THAT TRANS-CEND MORALITY.


THE BOTTOM LINE, JOHN, IS THAT THE NATIONAL SECURITY MAY BE AT STAKE. MUTANTS--AS INDIVIDUALS, AS A GROUP, AS A SPECIES--MUST BE INVESTIGATED. EVERYTHING POSSIBLE MUST BE LEARNED ABOUT THEM.
AND IF THEY PROVE TO BE A THREAT--TO THE NATION AND, BY EXTENSION, THE WORLD--THEN REGRETTABLE AS IT MAY SOUND...
...THEY MUST BE DEALT WITH.

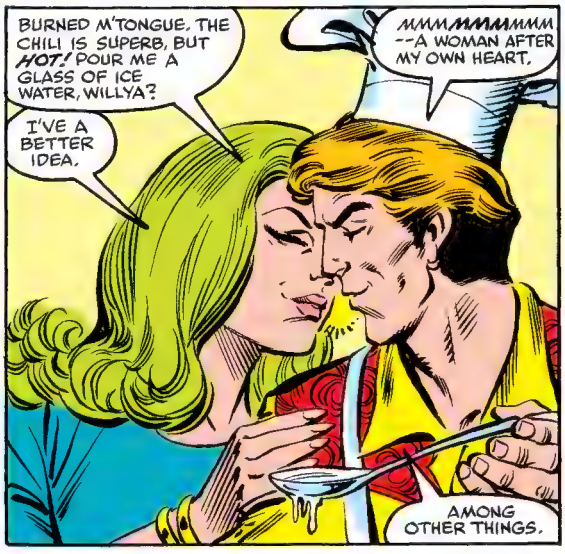

THAT MISERABLE, SANCTI-MONIOUS SOD!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND, MOIRA. MY FOLKS THINK HE'S A GOOD, DECENT MAN--WHY DOES HE HATE US SO?
THE NATURE OF THE BEAST, KIDDO--
--TO FEAR THAT WHICH IS DIFFERENT.

THIS IS TROUBLE. WHEN HE FORMED THE X-MEN, CHARLES WORKED WITH THE GOVERNMENT. THERE ARE COMPU-TER FILES ON THE ORIGINAL TEAM, AND PROBABLY ON YOU LOT, TOO. WE'VE BEEN LUCKY--AND SAFE--SO FAR, BUT THAT WON'T LAST.
THE FILES HAVE TO BE DESTROYED BEFORE THE X-MEN'S SECURITY IS IRREVOCABLY COMPROMISED.

NO PROBLEM. WE SIMPLY DESIGN AN OPEN-ENDED VIRUS PROGRAM TO ERASE ANY AND ALL REFERENCES TO THE X-MEN AND PLUG IT INTO A CENTRAL FEDERAL DATA BANK. FROM THERE, IT'LL INFECT THE ENTIRE SYSTEM IN NO TIME.
CAN YOU DO THAT, KITTEN?
THE STAR-JAMMERS CAN.


MEANWHILE, SOME TWO THOUSAND MILES WESTWARD...
...IN THE STARKLY BEAUTIFUL RIO DIABLO MOUNTAIN RANGE A SLEEK, UNEARTHLY SHUTTLECRAFT DROPS SILENTLY TO THE GROUND OUTSIDE THE HOUSE SHARED BY...

...FORMER X-MEN LORNA DANE (POLARIS) AND ALEX SUMMERS (HAVOK).
HOW'S DINNER? I'M STARVED!
BE PATIENT, M'LOVE--
OWW!
WHAT'S WRONG?!


BURNED M'TONGUE. THE CHILI IS SUPERB, BUT HOT! POUR ME A GLASS OF ICE WATER, WILLYA?
MMMMMMMMMM --A WOMAN AFTER MY OWN HEART.
I'VE A BETTER IDEA.
AMONG OTHER THINGS.

NOK NOK NOK
SIGH
MURPHY'S LAW-- IT NEVER FAILS, JUST WHEN THINGS GET INTERESTING.
HOLD THOSE THOUGHTS, SWEETHEART, WHILE I SEE WHO THE HECK IT IS.

H'LO, ALEX.
SCOTT!
LORNA, LOOK WHO'S HERE! WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THIS NECK OF THE WOODS, BIG BROTHER? YOU TIRED OF RAMRODDING THE X-MEN?!
YOU LOOK GREAT! C'MON IN!
ALEX, I'M NOT ALONE.
SO I SEE.

THERE'S NO EASY WAY TO SAY THIS: ALEX, MEET CHRISTOPHER SUMMERS --CORSAIR, LEADER OF THE STARJAMMERS--
--OUR FATHER.

REACTIONS ARE MANY AND VARIED -- AND NOT ALL OF THEM PLEASANT -- BEWILDERMENT AND DISBELIEF VYING WITH ELATION IN ALEX AS HE STRUGGLES, AS SCOTT DID A WEEK AGO, TO ASSIMILATE THIS STUNNING REVELATION. A FOUR-WAY CONVERSATION / REUNION BEGINS OVER DINNER AND IT'S STILL GOING ON WITHOUT LET-UP LATE THE FOLLOWING DAY.

AT ROUGHLY THE SAME TIME, ON THE EAST COAST, AN OFFICIAL-LOOKING CAR APPROACHES THE MAIN ENTRANCE...

...OF A BUILDING KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD...

...AND THREE PASSENGERS ALIGHT, ONE WEARING THE UNIFORM OF A CAPTAIN IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES, ONE THAT OF A U.S. AIR FORCE COLONEL.

YOU SURE THIS CRAZY STUNT'LL WORK, CAROL?

TRUST ME, WOLVERINE.

NIGHTCRAWLER, YOU WAIT HERE. IF WE HIT TROUBLE, STORM WILL CALL YOU ON HER MICRO-TRANSCEIVER.

JAWOHL, CAROL. TAKE CARE, *MEIN FREUNDE*, AND GOOD LUCK.

HOWEVER, AS THEY ENTER THE **PENTAGON**...

EXCUSE ME, CAPTAIN. WE'RE GETTING EXCEPTIONALLY STRONG READINGS FROM OUR METAL DETECTORS.

NO! WOLVERINE, I BEG YOU...

...DO NOTHING RASH.

LIEUTENANT, I HAVEN'T TIME FOR THIS. WE'RE DUE TO BRIEF THE JOINT CHIEFS...

I'LL CLEAR THIS UP, COLONEL.

MY MEDIC CARD, MISTER. A GOOD CHUNK O' MY SKELETON IS METAL. PROSTHETICS. WAR WOUNDS. THAT'S WHAT TRIGGERED YOUR SNOOPER.

FOR A MOMENT, I THOUGHT WE WERE LOST.

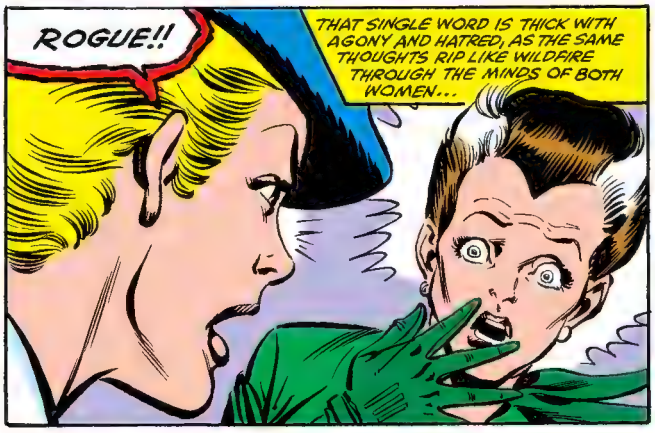
NAH. CAROL'N'ME HAD THAT KID PRETTY WELL BUFFALO'D. I WAS WONDERIN' THOUGH, CAROL, ABOUT THE COMMAND PILOT WINGS AN' "FRUIT SALAD" YOU'RE WEARIN'-- ARE THEY LEGIT?

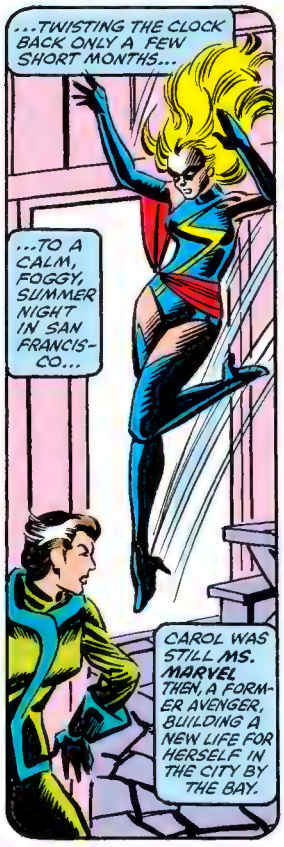
AS MUCH AS YOURS, LOGAN. THE WINGS AND MEDALS WERE EARNED. SO WAS THE RANK. I WAS ALLOWED TO TEMPORARILY UPGRADE FROM MAJOR TO COLONEL ON MISSIONS. THE CLOUT CAME IN USEFUL.

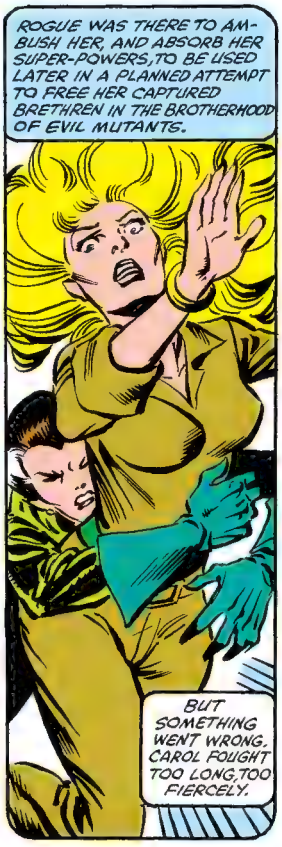
WE'LL NEED IT, TO REACH THE PRIME DATA BANK, IN THE S.I.S.O.--***SPECIAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE OPERATION***--VAULT. IT'S THE MOST HEAVILY GUARDED AREA OF THE ENTIRE PENTAGON.

THE PENTAGON WAS ORIGINALLY DESIGNED AS A MILITARY HOSPITAL IN WORLD WAR II; THAT'S WHY THE CORRIDORS ARE SO WIDE--TO ACCOMMODATE DOUBLE AND TRIPLE-PARKED GURNIES.
BECAUSE OF ITS SIZE--AND CONFUSING LAYOUT--PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS GETTING LOST, AND SOME, NATURALLY, ARE RUMORED NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN.
THINK THAT'LL HAPPEN TO US, COLONEL?

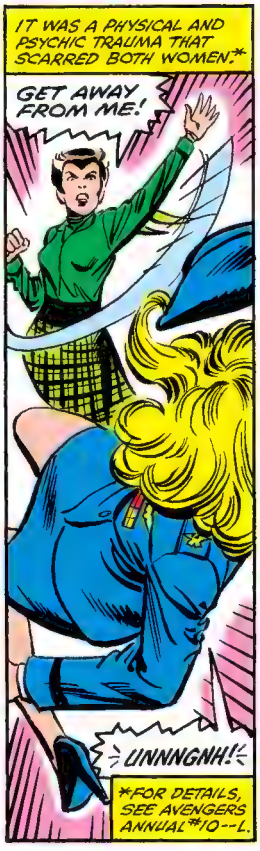
ANYTHING'S POSSIBLE--OH! I BEG YOUR PARDON.
MA FAULT, COLONEL, AH SHOULD HAVE LOOKED--YOU!
DANVERS!

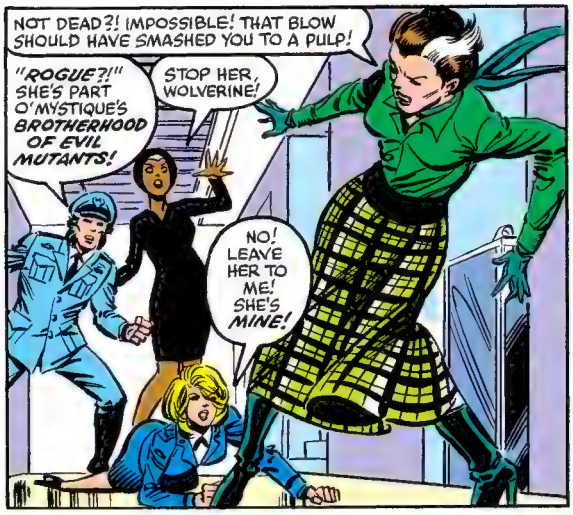

ROGUE!!
THAT SINGLE WORD IS THICK WITH AGONY AND HATRED, AS THE SAME THOUGHTS RIP LIKE WILDFIRE THROUGH THE MINDS OF BOTH WOMEN...

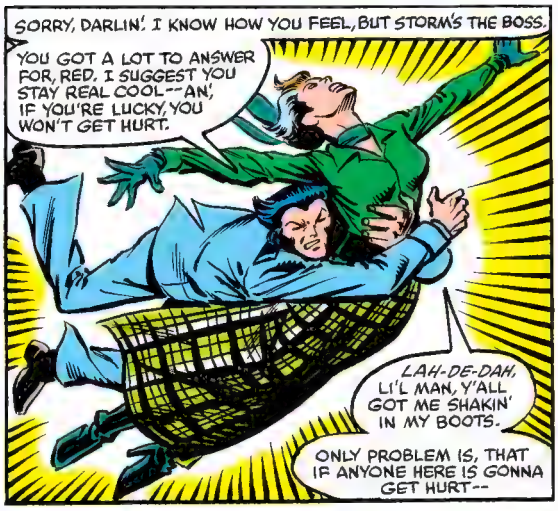

...TWISTING THE CLOCK BACK ONLY A FEW SHORT MONTHS...
...TO A CALM, FOGGY, SUMMER NIGHT IN SAN FRANCISCO...
CAROL WAS STILL MS. MARVEL THEN, A FORMER AVENGER, BUILDING A NEW LIFE FOR HERSELF IN THE CITY BY THE BAY.


ROGUE WAS THERE TO AMBUSH HER, AND ABSORB HER SUPER-POWERS, TO BE USED LATER IN A PLANNED ATTEMPT TO FREE HER CAPTURED BRETHREN IN THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS.
BUT SOMETHING WENT WRONG. CAROL FOUGHT TOO LONG, TOO FIERCELY.

AND INSTEAD OF TEMPORARILY "STEALING" CAROL'S ABILITIES AND MEMORIES...
...ROGUE'S TRANSFER BECAME PERMANENT.


IT WAS A PHYSICAL AND PSYCHIC TRAUMA THAT SCARRED BOTH WOMEN.*
GET AWAY FROM ME!
UNNNGNH!
*FOR DETAILS, SEE AVENGERS ANNUAL #10--L.

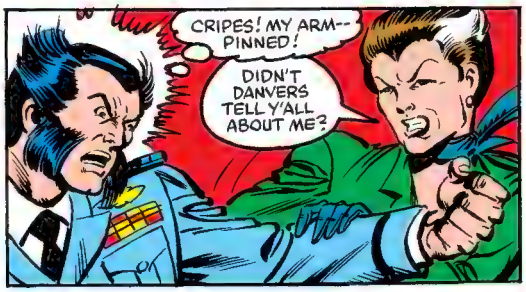

NOT DEAD?! IMPOSSIBLE! THAT BLOW SHOULD HAVE SMASHED YOU TO A PULP!
"ROGUE?!" SHE'S PART O'MYSTIQUE'S BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS!
STOP HER, WOLVERINE!
NO! LEAVE HER TO ME! SHE'S MINE!


SORRY, DARLIN'. I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, BUT STORM'S THE BOSS.
YOU GOT A LOT TO ANSWER FOR, RED. I SUGGEST YOU STAY REAL COOL--AN', IF YOU'RE LUCKY, YOU WON'T GET HURT.
LAH-DE-DAH, LI'L MAN, Y'ALL GOT ME SHAKIN' IN MY BOOTS.
ONLY PROBLEM IS, THAT IF ANYONE HERE IS GONNA GET HURT--

WHAM!
--IT'S YOU!

NICE TRY. BUT MY BONES ARE LACED WITH ADAMANTIUM. THEY'RE VIRTUALLY UNBREAKABLE.
I HAVE CLAWS, TOO, MADE OUTTA THE SAME STUFF, AN' HONED RAZOR-SHARP. I'D USE 'EM ON YOU...

...BUT YOU AIN'T WORTH THE EFFORT.
BAD MOVE, SHRIMP.

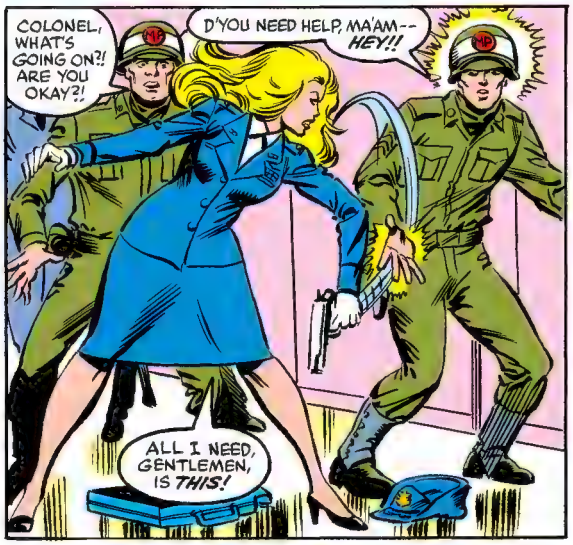

CRIPES! MY ARM--PINNED!
DIDN'T DANVERS TELL Y'ALL ABOUT ME?

AH ABSORB THE MINDS AN' ABILITIES OF WHOEVER AH TOUCH. THE MEREST FLESH-TO-FLESH CONTACT'LL DO THE TRICK.
BUT AH SEE NO HARM IN HAVIN' A LITTLE FUN IN THE PROCESS, DO YOU, WOLVERINE-HONEY, HMNH?
AH DIDN'T THINK SO.

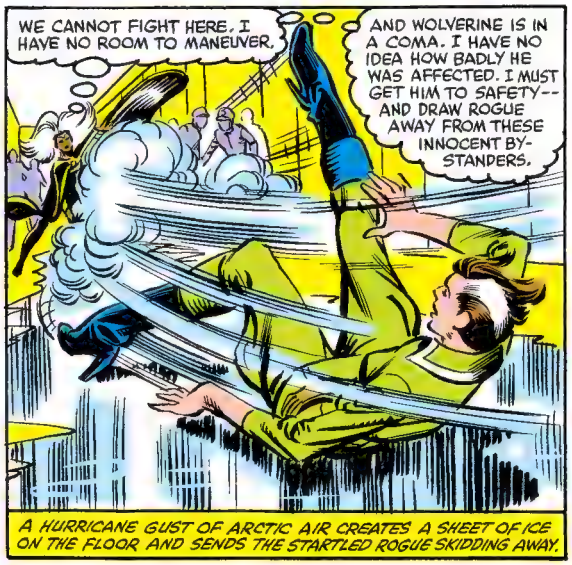
HE MAKES A CONVULSIVE, DESPERATE EFFORT TO BREAK FREE-- CLAWS EXTENDING FROM HOUSINGS BUILT INTO HIS HANDS AND FOREARMS-- BUT EVEN AS HE DOES SO, HIS MIND GOES BLANK, HIS BODY LIMP...

NO MORE, ROGUE!
AAIII--!

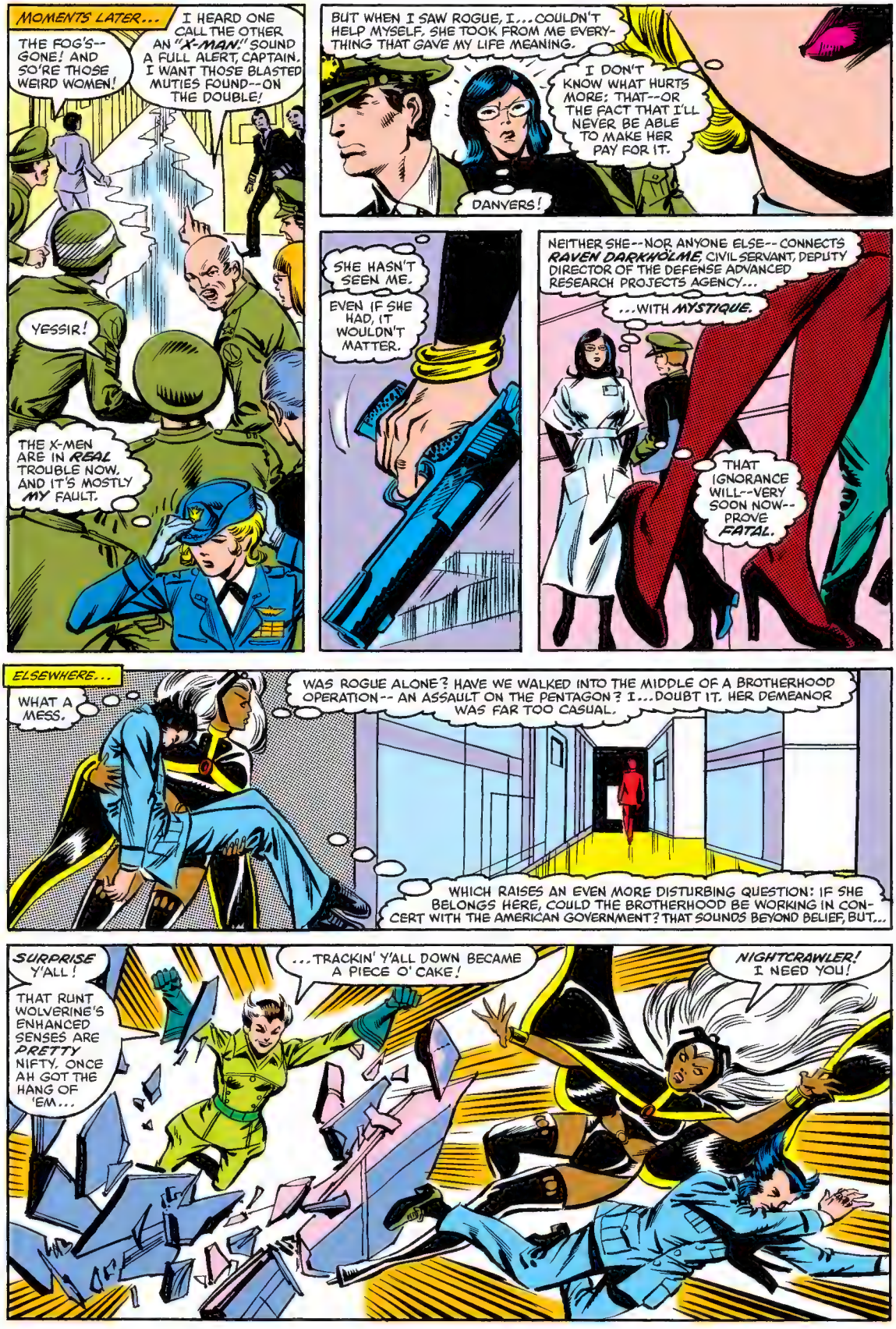
THAT WAS A WARNING SHOT, VILLAIN. I SUGGEST YOU TAKE THE HINT AND DEPART-- WHILE YOU ARE STILL ABLE.
NOT A CHANCE, WITCH. AH'VE BEEN LOOKIN' FORWARD TO MEETIN' YOU X-MEN--
--AN' TEARIN' YOU APART!


COLONEL, WHAT'S GOING ON?! ARE YOU OKAY?!
D'YOU NEED HELP, MA'AM-- HEY!!
ALL I NEED, GENTLEMEN, IS THIS!

FIRE AWAY, SUGAR.
WON'T DO YOU NO GOOD.
SHE'S RIGHT, DEVIL TAKE HER SOUL. ALL MS. MARVEL WAS-- ALL I WAS -- SHE IS.
AND WILL BE-- FOREVER.
BLAM BLAM BLAM


WE CANNOT FIGHT HERE. I HAVE NO ROOM TO MANEUVER.
AND WOLVERINE IS IN A COMA. I HAVE NO IDEA HOW BADLY HE WAS AFFECTED. I MUST GET HIM TO SAFETY-- AND DRAW ROGUE AWAY FROM THESE INNOCENT BYSTANDERS.
A HURRICANE GUST OF ARCTIC AIR CREATES A SHEET OF ICE ON THE FLOOR AND SENDS THE STARTLED ROGUE SKIDDING AWAY.

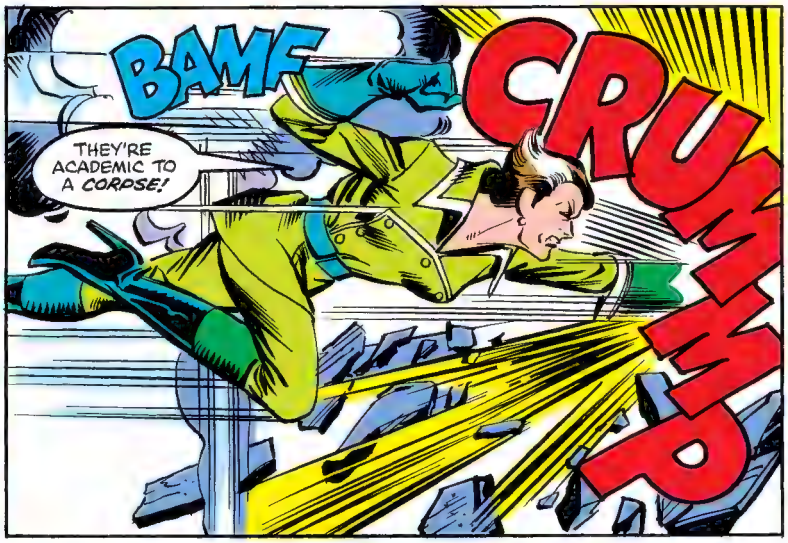
THAT SAME INSTANT, STORM GENERATES A PEA-SOUP FOG IN THE CORRIDOR, THROWING A BRIEF, MEANINGFUL GLANCE CAROL'S WAY BEFORE SHE SCOOPS UP WOLVERINE AND DISAPPEARS.
I KNOW YOU HATE ROGUE, CAROL-- AND WITH GOOD REASON--
--BUT WE CAME HERE FOR A PURPOSE. THE FUTURE OF THE X-MEN RESTS IN YOUR HANDS, MY FRIEND. DO NOT FAIL US.


MOMENTS LATER...
THE FOG'S--GONE! AND SO'RE THOSE WEIRD WOMEN!
I HEARD ONE CALL THE OTHER AN "X-MAN." SOUND A FULL ALERT, CAPTAIN. I WANT THOSE BLASTED MUTIES FOUND--ON THE DOUBLE!
YESSIR!
THE X-MEN ARE IN REAL TROUBLE NOW. AND IT'S MOSTLY MY FAULT.
BUT WHEN I SAW ROGUE, I...COULDN'T HELP MYSELF. SHE TOOK FROM ME EVERYTHING THAT GAVE MY LIFE MEANING.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HURTS MORE: THAT--OR THE FACT THAT I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO MAKE HER PAY FOR IT.
DANVERS!
SHE HASN'T SEEN ME.
EVEN IF SHE HAD, IT WOULDN'T MATTER.
NEITHER SHE--NOR ANYONE ELSE--CONNECTS RAVEN DARKHÖLME, CIVIL SERVANT, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE DEFENSE ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY...
...WITH MYSTIQUE.
THAT IGNORANCE WILL--VERY SOON NOW--PROVE FATAL.
ELSEWHERE...
WHAT A MESS.
WAS ROGUE ALONE? HAVE WE WALKED INTO THE MIDDLE OF A BROTHERHOOD OPERATION-- AN ASSAULT ON THE PENTAGON? I...DOUBT IT. HER DEMEANOR WAS FAR TOO CASUAL.
WHICH RAISES AN EVEN MORE DISTURBING QUESTION: IF SHE BELONGS HERE, COULD THE BROTHERHOOD BE WORKING IN CONCERT WITH THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT? THAT SOUNDS BEYOND BELIEF, BUT...
SURPRISE Y'ALL!
THAT RUNT WOLVERINE'S ENHANCED SENSES ARE PRETTY NIFTY. ONCE AH GOT THE HANG OF 'EM...
...TRACKIN' Y'ALL DOWN BECAME A PIECE O' CAKE!
NIGHTCRAWLER! I NEED YOU!

HE CAN'T SAVE YOU, SUGAH.
WANNA BET?
HUH?!?
I HEARD YOUR CALL OVER OUR MICRO-TRANSCEIVER COMLINK, STORM. I TELEPORTED HERE AS QUICKLY AS I COULD. SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG.
I HAVE NO COMPLAINTS, NIGHTCRAWLER. BUT--BE CAREFUL WITH HER! SHE'S DANGEROUS.

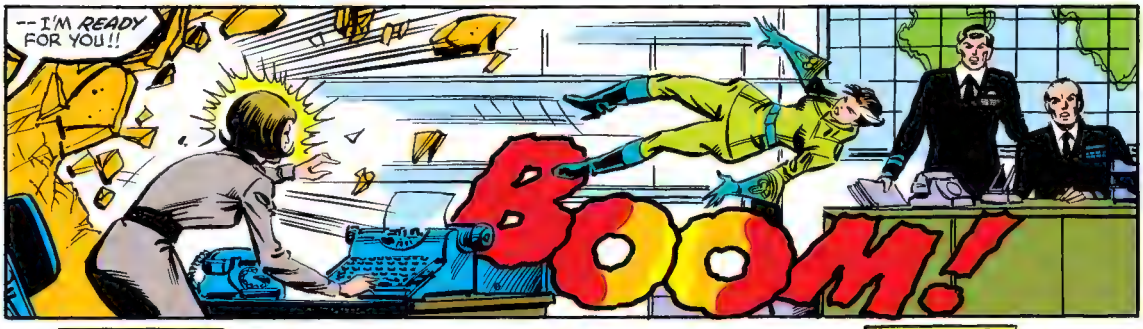
SO AM I. WHERE IS MYSTIQUE, LEIBLING?! SHE AND I HAVE MUCH TO TALK ABOUT. TALK, CHILD--BEFORE THINGS GET ROUGH!
YYIII!

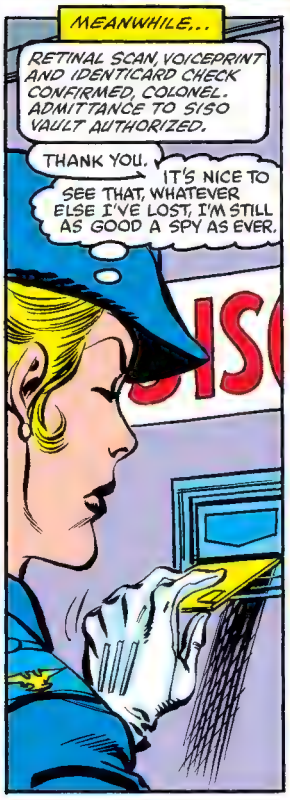
BUB, AH WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT THOSE QUESTIONS, IF AH WERE YOU.

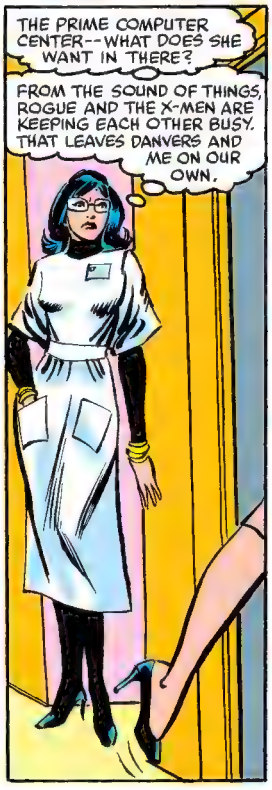

BAMF
CRUMP
THEY'RE ACADEMIC TO A CORPSE!

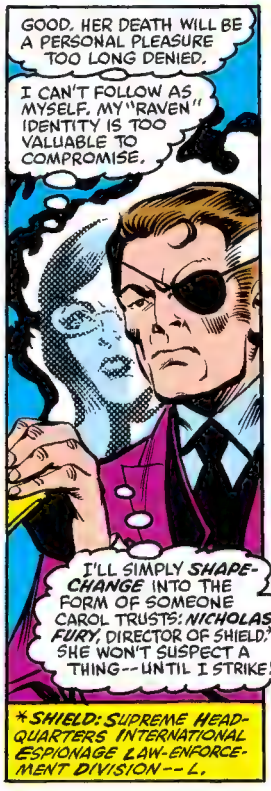
YOU'LL HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THAT, ROGUE, TO HIT A FOE WHO CAN TELEPORT OUT OF YOUR WAY.
OOOHHHH...
MY SKULL... POUNDIN' FIT TA BUST. FEEL SO FLAMIN' WEAK--BUT GETTIN' STRONGER EV'RY SECOND! THE EFFECT O' ROGUE'S POWER MUST BE TEMPORARY. THE ABILITIES SHE STOLE FROM ME--ARE COMIN' BACK!

AH KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED, RUNT. BUT WHAT AH DID ONCE, AH CAN DO AGAIN.
YOU CAN TRY, BABE. BUT THIS TIME--


--I'M READY FOR YOU!!
BOOM!


MEANWHILE...
RETINAL SCAN, VOICEPRINT AND IDENTICARD CHECK CONFIRMED, COLONEL. ADMITTANCE TO SISO VAULT AUTHORIZED.
THANK YOU.
IT'S NICE TO SEE THAT, WHATEVER ELSE I'VE LOST, I'M STILL AS GOOD A SPY AS EVER.


THE PRIME COMPUTER CENTER--WHAT DOES SHE WANT IN THERE?
FROM THE SOUND OF THINGS, ROGUE AND THE X-MEN ARE KEEPING EACH OTHER BUSY. THAT LEAVES DANVERS AND ME ON OUR OWN.


GOOD. HER DEATH WILL BE A PERSONAL PLEASURE TOO LONG DENIED.
I CAN'T FOLLOW AS MYSELF. MY "RAVEN" IDENTITY IS TOO VALUABLE TO COMPROMISE.
I'LL SIMPLY SHAPE-CHANGE INTO THE FORM OF SOMEONE CAROL TRUSTS: NICHOLAS FURY, DIRECTOR OF SHIELD.* SHE WON'T SUSPECT A THING--UNTIL I STRIKE!
*SHIELD: SUPREME HEADQUARTERS INTERNATIONAL ESPIONAGE LAW-ENFORCEMENT DIVISION--L.

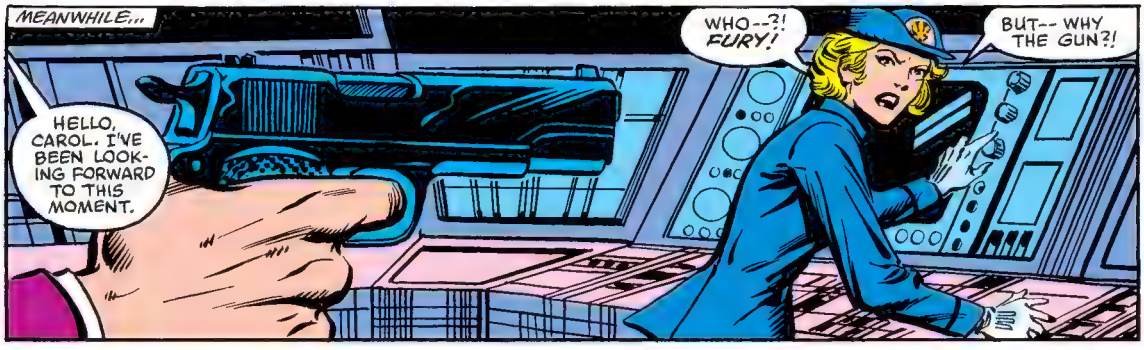
ELSEWHERE...
A FULL-POWER BOLT--AND ROGUE SHRUGS IT OFF WITH A LAUGH.
Y'ALL GET AN "A" FOR EFFORT, STORM.

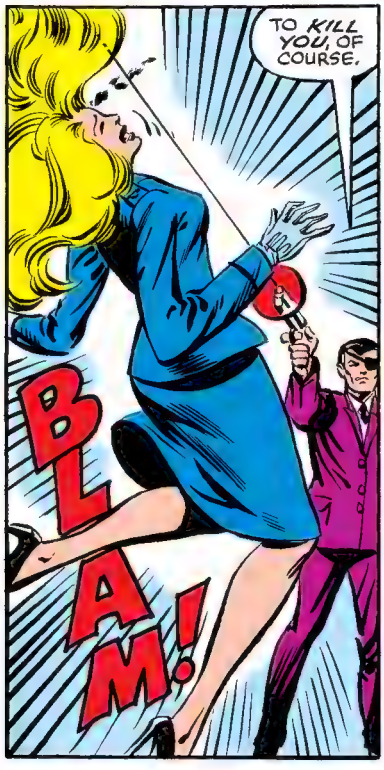
YOU TRIED, YOU LOST. THERE ARE WORSE EPITAPHS.
NO!!
AT ROGUE'S TOUCH, ORORO FEELS A SUDDEN, TERRIBLE, WRENCHING DISSOLUTION OF SELF AND THEN HER AWARENESS--INDEED, FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, HER VERY EXISTENCE AS A SENTIENT BEING--CEASES.

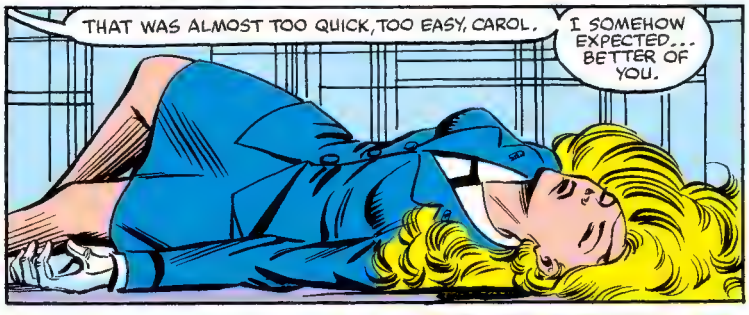
BUT THIS TIME, ROGUE DISCOVERS, SHE MAY HAVE ABSORBED MORE THAN SHE BARGAINED FOR.
STORM'S CONTROL OVER THE WEATHER HAS BEEN HONED AND PERFECTED BY HALF-A-LIFETIME OF PRACTICE AND EXPERIENCE. ROGUE LACKS THOSE CRITICAL ASSETS.

THAT COSTS HER DEARLY.
HAH! THE WEATHER IS EXPLODING OUT OF CONTROL. TOO MUCH IS HAPPENING TOO FAST-- ROGUE CAN'T CONTROL IT. SERVES HER RIGHT.
I'D BEST HAUL STORM OUT OF HARM'S WAY WHILE I HAVE THE CHANCE.

SO MUCH FOR THAT IDEA-- ROGUE'S GENERATED A FLASH FLOOD!
THIS IS NOT GOING WELL!
COULD BE... WORSE, MY FRIEND. MORE ENERGY ROGUE... EXPENDS... FASTER SHE USES UP STOLEN POWERS-- SOONER THEY REVERT TO ORIGINAL OWNERS. I... CAN THINK. SOON, I'LL BE ABLE... TO ACT.
WHAT THEN, STORM?! SHE'S TRASHIN' US BUT GOOD-- HOW DO WE BEAT HER?!


MEANWHILE...
HELLO, CAROL. I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS MOMENT.
WHO--?! FURY!
BUT-- WHY THE GUN?!


TO KILL YOU, OF COURSE.
BLAM!

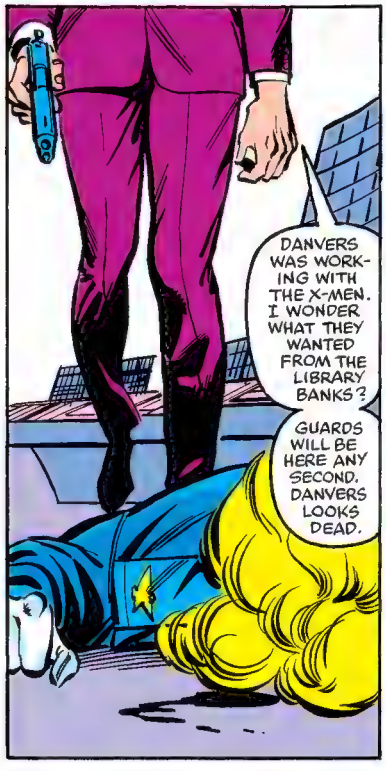

THAT WAS ALMOST TOO QUICK, TOO EASY, CAROL.
I SOMEHOW EXPECTED... BETTER OF YOU.

Y'ALL GLUTTONS FOR PUNISHMENT? AH THOUGHT YOU'D BE LONG GONE BY NOW.
YOU HAVEN'T A PRAYER, YOU KNOW. AT MY WEAKEST, AH STILL POSSESS THE POWERS O' MS. MARVEL. AND THAT'S MORE'N ENOUGH TO TURN THIS ENTIRE BUILDIN' INTO A MOUNTAIN O' RUBBLE.
OUR MINDS AND SOULS ARE SUPREMELY PRECIOUS TO US, ROGUE. YOU-- OR ANYONE-- TAMPER WITH THEM AT YOUR PERIL!

WE ALSO DO NOT LIKE LOSING!
I'VE SNARED HER! SHE'S YOURS, WOLVERINE-- BUT DON'T LET HER TOUCH YOU!
I'VE LEARNED MY LESSON, STORM. YOU KEEP HER COVERED, AN' I'LL PUT HER DOWN FOR THE COUNT.

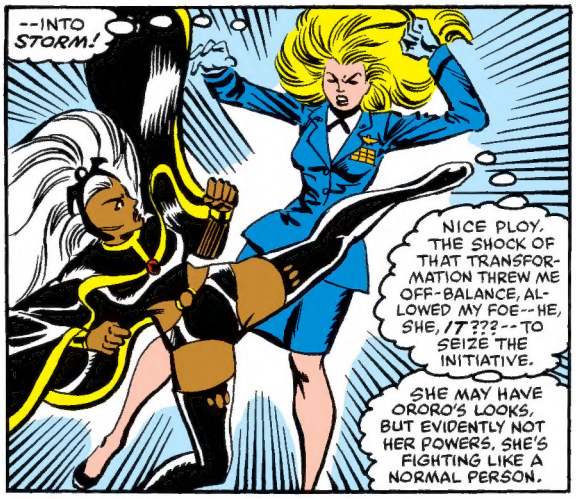
THAT THE BEST YOU CAN DO, SUGAH?
YOU'RE A TOUGH LITTLE COOKIE, AIN'T'CHA, ROGUE? WELL, IF A RIGHT CROSS TO THE JAW WON'T DO THE TRICK...
...LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I HIT SOME CRITICAL NEURAL PRESSURE POINTS.

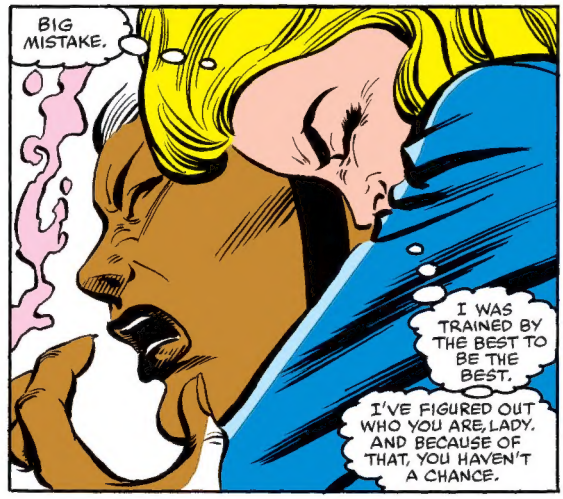
SORRY, RUNT. WITH ME--
--ONE SHOT IS ALL YOU GET!

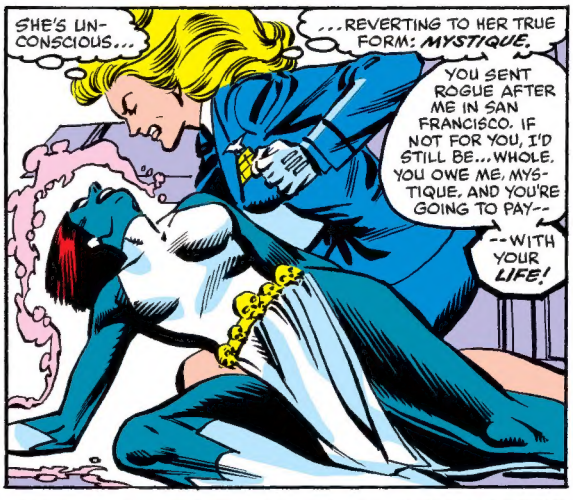

DANVERS WAS WORKING WITH THE X-MEN. I WONDER WHAT THEY WANTED FROM THE LIBRARY BANKS?
GUARDS WILL BE HERE ANY SECOND. DANVERS LOOKS DEAD.

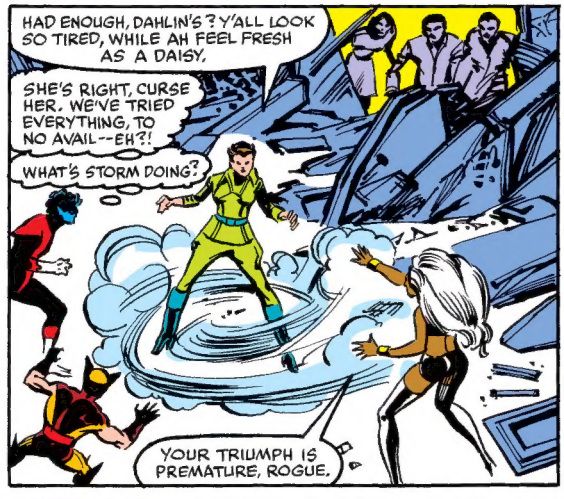
BUT I'LL ADMINISTER A COUP DE GRACE, JUST TO MAKE SURE--
--UNNNFF!
LOOKS ARE DECEIVING, BUSTER!

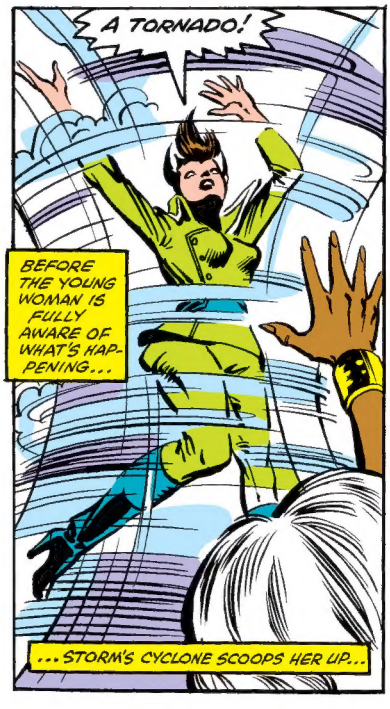
THANK HEAVEN FOR MY EXTRAORDINARY REFLEXES. I DODGED QUICKLY ENOUGH SO THAT BULLET ONLY GRAZED ME. MY HEAD HURTS LIKE BLAZES--BUT I'M ALIVE!
OBVIOUSLY, THIS ISN'T NICK FURY, BUT WHO-- I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
HIS FEATURES-- CHANGING BEFORE MY EYES--

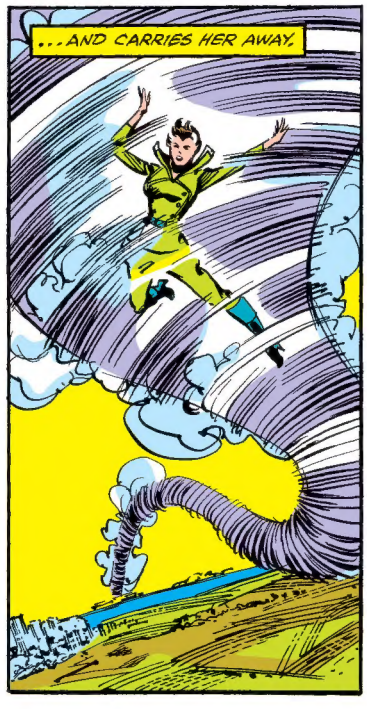

--INTO STORM!
NICE PLOY. THE SHOCK OF THAT TRANSFORMATION THREW ME OFF-BALANCE, ALLOWED MY FOE--HE, SHE, IT???--TO SEIZE THE INITIATIVE.
SHE MAY HAVE ORORO'S LOOKS, BUT EVIDENTLY NOT HER POWERS. SHE'S FIGHTING LIKE A NORMAL PERSON.

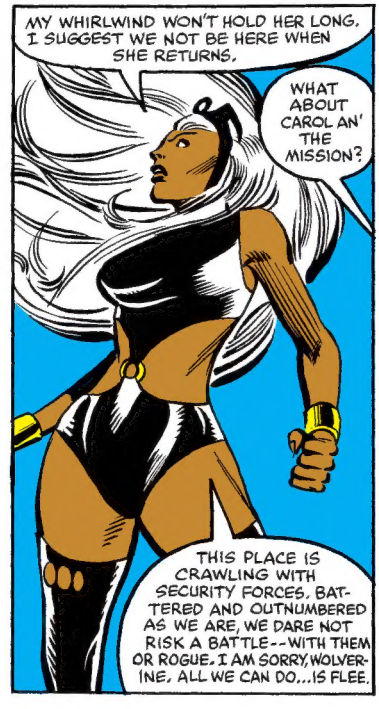

BIG MISTAKE.
I WAS TRAINED BY THE BEST TO BE THE BEST.
I'VE FIGURED OUT WHO YOU ARE, LADY. AND BECAUSE OF THAT, YOU HAVEN'T A CHANCE.

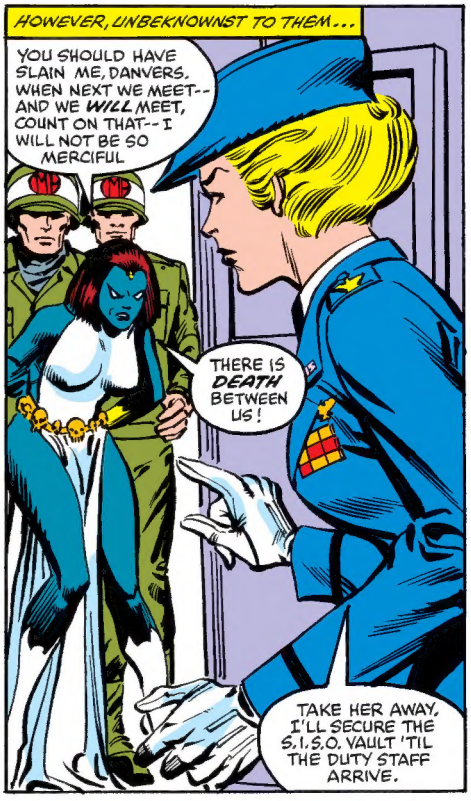

SHE'S UNCONSCIOUS...
...REVERTING TO HER TRUE FORM: MYSTIQUE.
YOU SENT ROGUE AFTER ME IN SAN FRANCISCO. IF NOT FOR YOU, I'D STILL BE...WHOLE. YOU OWE ME, MYSTIQUE, AND YOU'RE GOING TO PAY--
--WITH YOUR LIFE!

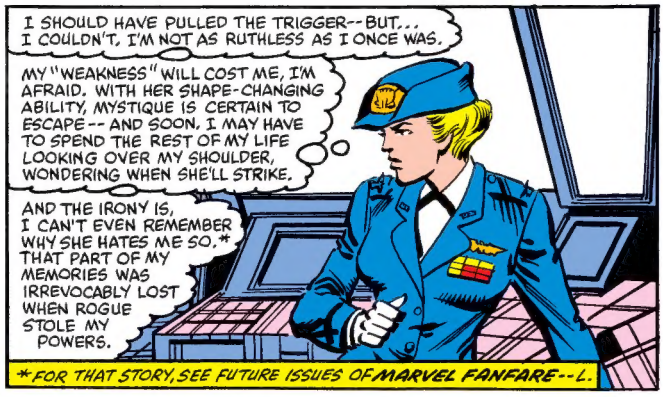

HAD ENOUGH, DAHLIN'S? Y'ALL LOOK SO TIRED, WHILE AH FEEL FRESH AS A DAISY.
SHE'S RIGHT, CURSE HER. WE'VE TRIED EVERYTHING, TO NO AVAIL--EH?!
WHAT'S STORM DOING?
YOUR TRIUMPH IS PREMATURE, ROGUE.

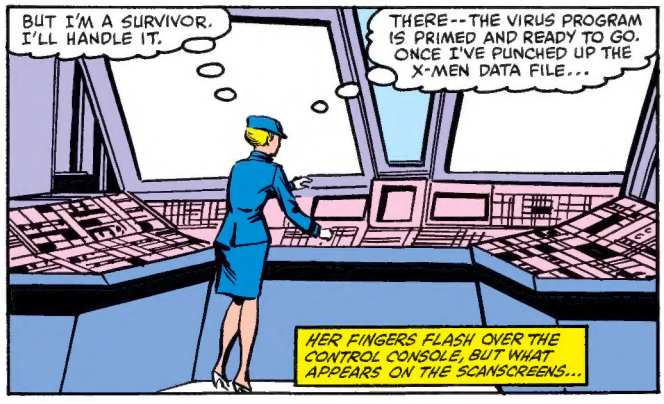

A TORNADO!
BEFORE THE YOUNG WOMAN IS FULLY AWARE OF WHAT'S HAPPENING...
...STORM'S CYCLONE SCOOPS HER UP...

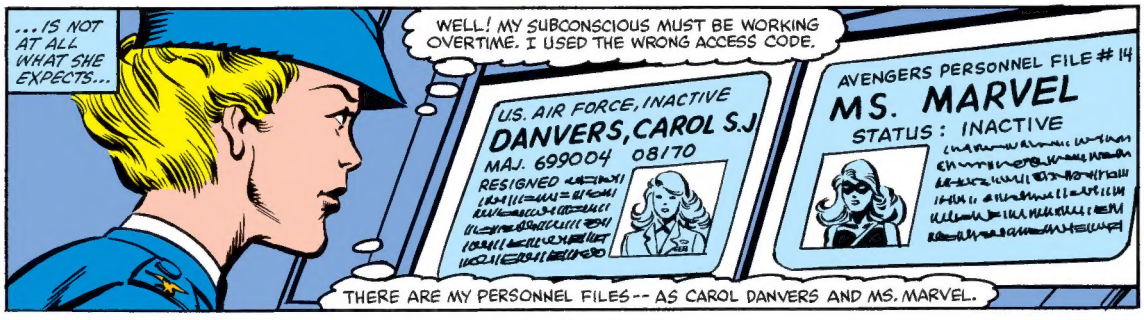

...AND CARRIES HER AWAY.


MY WHIRLWIND WON'T HOLD HER LONG. I SUGGEST WE NOT BE HERE WHEN SHE RETURNS.
WHAT ABOUT CAROL AN' THE MISSION?
THIS PLACE IS CRAWLING WITH SECURITY FORCES. BATTERED AND OUTNUMBERED AS WE ARE, WE DARE NOT RISK A BATTLE--WITH THEM OR ROGUE. I AM SORRY, WOLVERINE. ALL WE CAN DO...IS FLEE.

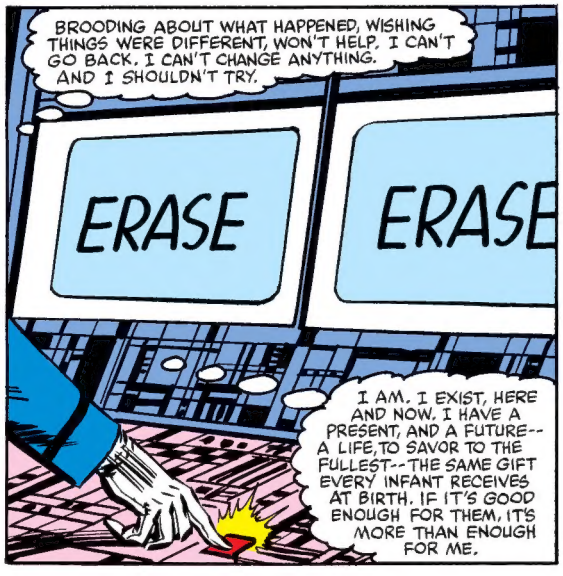

HOWEVER, UNBEKNOWNST TO THEM...
YOU SHOULD HAVE SLAIN ME, DANVERS. WHEN NEXT WE MEET--AND WE WILL MEET, COUNT ON THAT--I WILL NOT BE SO MERCIFUL
THERE IS DEATH BETWEEN US!
TAKE HER AWAY. I'LL SECURE THE S.I.S.O. VAULT 'TIL THE DUTY STAFF ARRIVE.

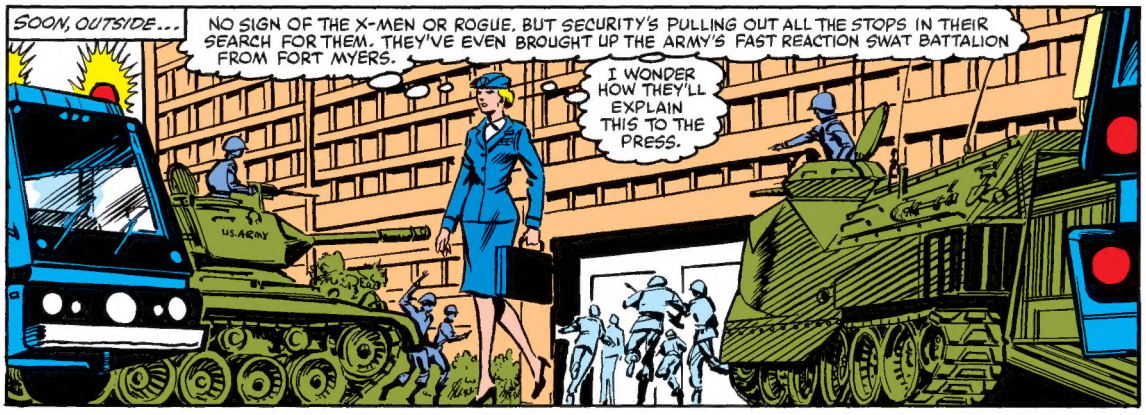

I SHOULD HAVE PULLED THE TRIGGER--BUT... I COULDN'T. I'M NOT AS RUTHLESS AS I ONCE WAS.
MY "WEAKNESS" WILL COST ME, I'M AFRAID. WITH HER SHAPE-CHANGING ABILITY, MYSTIQUE IS CERTAIN TO ESCAPE--AND SOON. I MAY HAVE TO SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE LOOKING OVER MY SHOULDER, WONDERING WHEN SHE'LL STRIKE.
AND THE IRONY IS, I CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER WHY SHE HATES ME SO.* THAT PART OF MY MEMORIES WAS IRREVOCABLY LOST WHEN ROGUE STOLE MY POWERS.
*FOR THAT STORY, SEE FUTURE ISSUES OF MARVEL FANFARE--L.

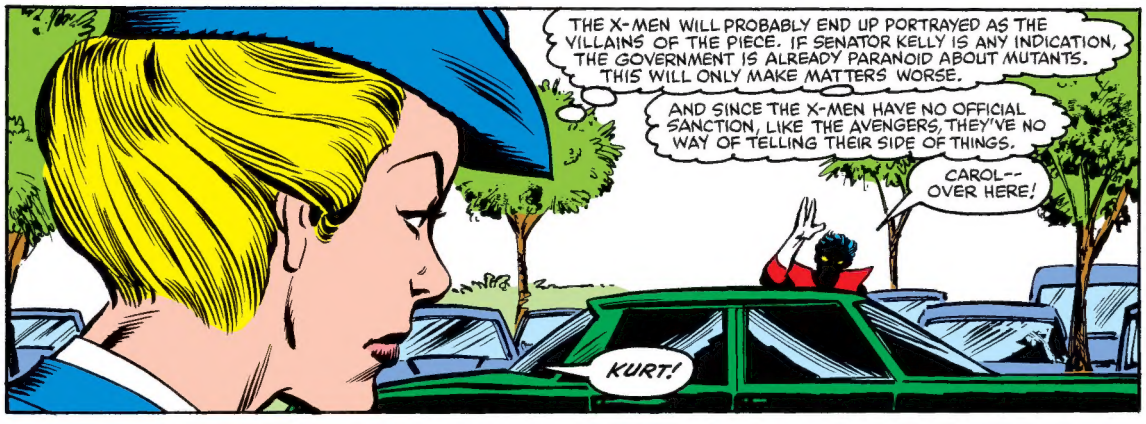

BUT I'M A SURVIVOR. I'LL HANDLE IT.
THERE--THE VIRUS PROGRAM IS PRIMED AND READY TO GO. ONCE I'VE PUNCHED UP THE X-MEN DATA FILE...
HER FINGERS FLASH OVER THE CONTROL CONSOLE, BUT WHAT APPEARS ON THE SCANSCREENS...

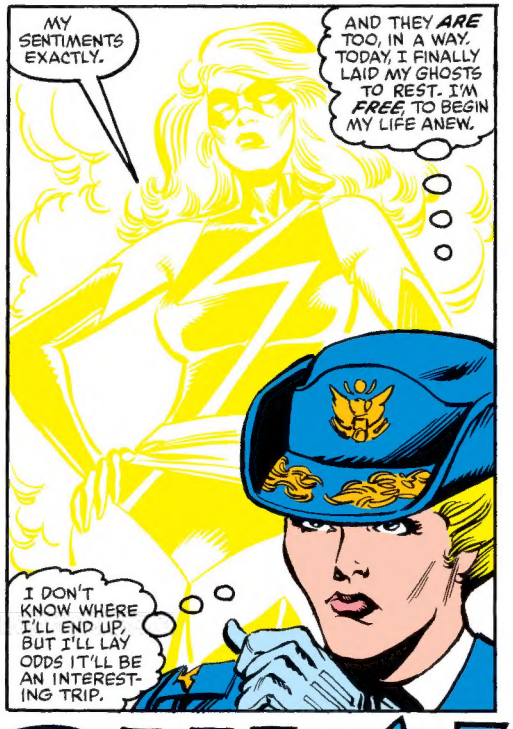

...IS NOT AT ALL WHAT SHE EXPECTS...
WELL! MY SUBCONSCIOUS MUST BE WORKING OVERTIME. I USED THE WRONG ACCESS CODE.
U.S. AIR FORCE, INACTIVE
DANVERS, CAROL S.J
MAJ. 699004 08170
RESIGNED
AVENGERS PERSONNEL FILE # 14
MS. MARVEL
STATUS: INACTIVE
THERE ARE MY PERSONNEL FILES--AS CAROL DANVERS AND MS. MARVEL.

MY HISTORY--MY LIFE--COMPRESSED ONTO A FRACTION OF MICROCHIP. THE FACES ARE FAMILIAR...
...BUT THE WOMEN THEY REPRESENT ...ARE STRANGERS.
THEY WERE WOMEN OF GREAT PROMISE--WITH HOPES AND DREAMS. BUT THEIR LIVES ENDED. THEY..."DIED."


BROODING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED, WISHING THINGS WERE DIFFERENT, WON'T HELP. I CAN'T GO BACK. I CAN'T CHANGE ANYTHING. AND I SHOULDN'T TRY.
ERASE
ERASE
I AM. I EXIST, HERE AND NOW. I HAVE A PRESENT, AND A FUTURE--A LIFE, TO SAVOR TO THE FULLEST--THE SAME GIFT EVERY INFANT RECEIVES AT BIRTH. IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR THEM, IT'S MORE THAN ENOUGH FOR ME.







NEXT ISSUE: DRACULA!

MINUTEMEN

Sy13nt
Bob